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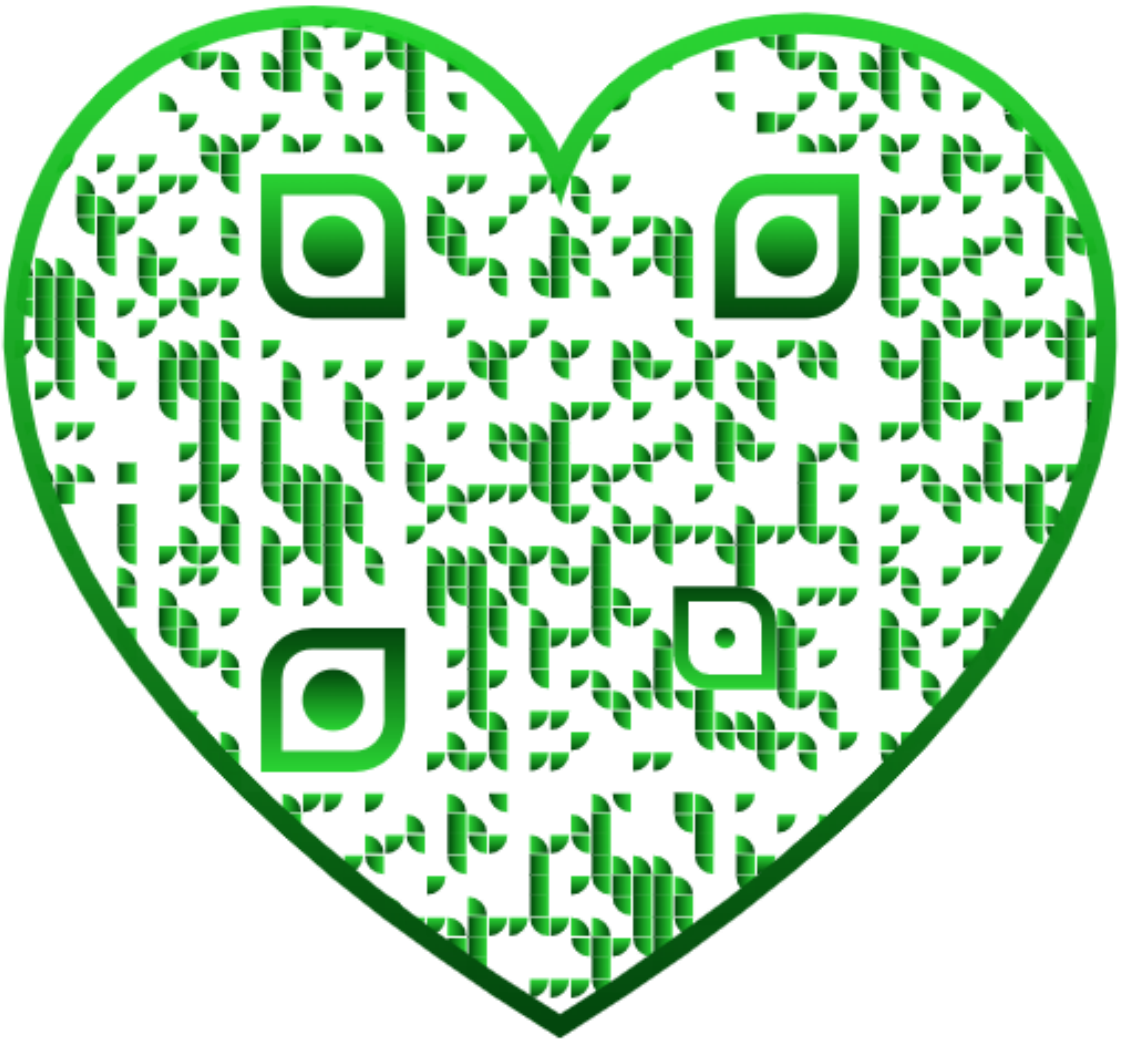
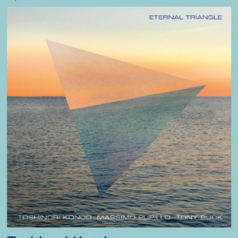
Tyshawn Sorey | Devin Townsend | Horse Lords | Joyce | Big Joanie



i dischi di angelica



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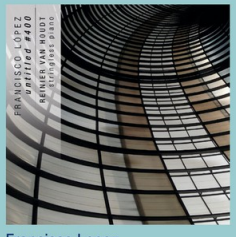

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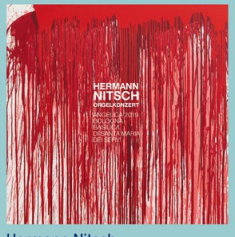

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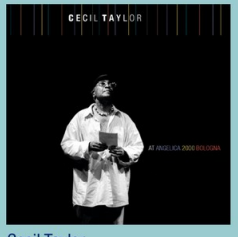
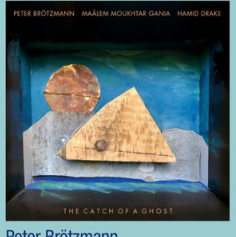


Cecil Taylor
AT ANGELICA 2000 BOLOGNA

Pygmies: Mbenzélé | Aka
DAYS FULL OF SOUND
LIFE IN THE RAINFOREST



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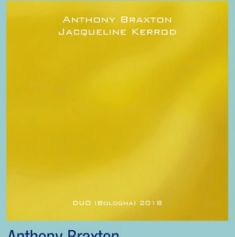
THE CATCH OF A GHOST

Roscoe Mitchell
SPLATTER



Anthony Braxton
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Charlemagne Palestine
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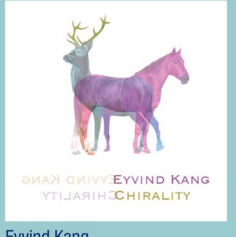

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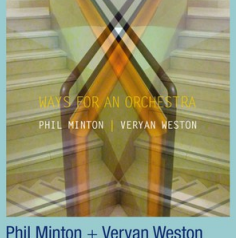

Phil Minton + Veryan Weston
WAYS FOR AN ORCHESTRA

Pauline Oliveros + Roscoe Mitchell
+ John Tilbury + Wadada Leo Smith
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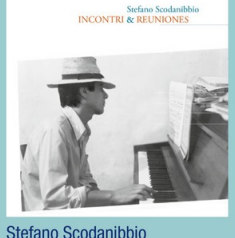

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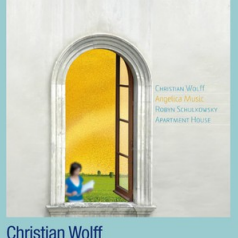

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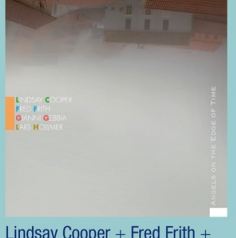

Lindsay Cooper + Fred Frith +
Gianni Gebbia + Lars Hollmer
ANGELS ON THE EDGE OF TIME

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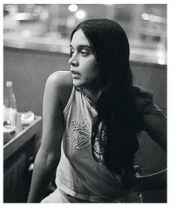

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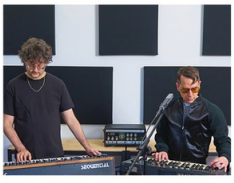
Cover: Tyshawn Sorey by Hannah Price

The Wire Tapper 60

Your track by track guide to this issue's free CD



1

AM Boys

"Distance Decay"

From *Distance Decay* (Glowmatic)

AM Boys are John Blonde, formerly of House Of Blondes, and producer/mixer/sound designer Chris Moore. Since forming in 2017, the electronic duo have played live throughout New York City, including opening for Suicide's Martin Rev. Combining vintage synths, a post-punk approach and contemporary rhythms, the pair's brand of ecstatic minimalism is captured on their debut album *Distance Decay*, with songs building from skeletal beginnings into enveloping cosmic atmospheres. amboys.bandcamp.com, instagram.com/am_boys_music

2

Lucrecia Dalt

"Contenida"

From *¡Ay!* (RVNG Intl)

Since her 2005 debut (as Lucrecia), Berlin based musician, sound artist and composer Lucrecia Dalt has traversed numerous styles ranging from synth pop to abstract soundscapes, while drawing upon mythology, philosophy, politics and cinema. Following the releases of *Anticlines* (2018), *No era sólida* (2020) and collaborations with Aaron Dilloway, Dalt's eighth solo album *¡Ay!* conjures a realm where her signature experimentation melds with syncopation and instrumentation harking back to the Colombian music of her early life. rvng.com

3

Balka Sound

"Ah Lusialala"

From *Balka Sound* (Strut)

Fronted by Nkibi Albert, a Ngonfi player from southern Congo-Brazzaville who had scored the solo hit "Ah Lusialala", Balka Sound were created to bring the Beembe folk style balka to an international audience. They released three albums between 1979–85, before their career was disrupted by the outbreak of civil war in the early 1990s. Balka Sound eventually returned and in 1996 performed at the Fête National; unfortunately when fighting resumed in 1997 the group disbanded after their studio was looted. strut.k7store.com

4

Eryck Abecassis

"Ta peau est une surface brûlante"

From *Évaporation* (Flag Day Recordings)

Currently living in Normandy in northern France, Eryck Abecassis composes electronic, orchestral and chamber music. As well as being an active film and theatre composer, he is also the creator of large-scale outdoor events including the internationally performed *La Vague* featuring a wave of 250 instrumentalists, *Kloch!*, for musicians, prepared bell tower and tuned car, and the land opera *Rivière Song*. His collaboration with Zeitkratzer leader Reinhold Friedl, *Animal électrique*, was released by Editions Mego in 2020. eryckabecassis.bandcamp.com, flagdayrecordings.bandcamp.com

5

Dave Clarkson

"Rollercoaster Ghost"

From *A Pocket Guide To Dreamland: Faded Fairgrounds And Coastal Ghost Towns Of The British Isles* (Cavendish House)

As a solo artist and group member, Manchester's Dave Clarkson has been involved in experimental music for over three decades with more than 40 releases to his name, including several albums in the *Guide* series: music created from field recordings of shorelines, caves, forests and fairgrounds. His other projects include Scissorgun with Alan Hempsall and Spectral Bazaar with Ruth Davies. daveclarkson.bandcamp.com, cavendishhouse.bandcamp.com

6

Melt Trio

"Moon With Planet"

From *Consumer* (Fun In The Church)

The Meyer brothers – Bernhard (bass) and Peter (guitar) – formed Melt Trio with drummer Moritz Baumgärtner in Berlin in 2010. With nods to Tortoise, Khruangbin, Philip Catherine and Marc Ribot, their take on jazz has been nominated three times for Germany's Echo Jazz music prize. Since 2016's *Stroy*, they have collaborated with Jan Bang on *Instants*, and the Meyers joined Jim Black and Wanja Slavin in Other Animal. Their fourth album *Consumer* is released this month. melttrio.com, funinthechurch.com

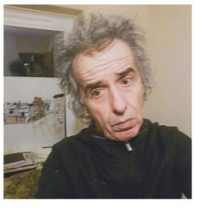
7

Lady Aicha & Pisco Crane's Original Fulu Miziki Of Kinshasa

"Two Seven"

From *N'djila Wa Mudjimu* (Nyege Nyege Tapes)

In 2003, Pisco Crane assembled a six-piece band from talented like-minds in the slums of Democratic Republic of the Congo capital Kinshasa where he grew up. Inspired by a meeting with instrument builder Bebson De La Rue, he made his musical tools from discarded rubbish. The group's furious mixture of industrial sonics, spiritual jazz, punk and Congolese soukous created a utopian vision of the future completed by performance artist, sculptor and fashion designer Lady Aisha's vivid masks and costumes. nyegenyegetapes.bandcamp.com, instagram.com/nyegenyegefest



8

John Francis

"24 Hours"

From *The Asylum* (IRL)

John Francis started out as a driving force in Exeter's 1970s punk scene, forming and fronting The Lou Reichner Band, whose sole release was 1980's *Final Vinyl* EP. Drawing inspiration from the three-way glam punk nexus of Lou Reed, Iggy Pop and David Bowie, he continued to release several albums and singles under his own name, as well as producing visual art and eight books of lyrics and poems.

Doug Young (1); Aina Climent (2); Christophe Raynaud de Lage (4); Max Zerrahn (6)

9
Reiko & Tori Kudo
"Homeless (Alternate Version)"
From *Tangerine* (A Colourful Storm)
Reiko and Tori Kudo first collaborated more than 40 years ago as members of Tokyo post-punk outfit Worst Noise, later renamed Noise. With euphonium player Hiroo Nakazaki they formed the core trio of Maher Shalal Hash Baz, whose rotating cast of musicians introduce folk, psychedelia, avant-pop and free jazz alongside the element of chance. Originally released on CD by Hyotan in 2013, *Tangerine* is reissued on vinyl by Melbourne's A Colourful Storm. acolourfulstorm.com

10
Sullivan Johns
"Part 6"
From *Assembled Parts* (Rusted Tone Recordings)
Hailing from Hebden Bridge, UK musician and composer Sullivan Johns studied at Leeds College of Music and Leeds College of Art and Design. He now divides his time between Calder Valley and Manchester. Made during 2021, *Assembled Parts* constructs a narrative on themes of loss, grief and memory from minimal drones and field recordings. linktr.ee/sullivanjohns, rustedtonerecordings.bandcamp.com

11
The Observatory & Koichi Shimizu
"I–330"
From *Demon State* (Midnight Shift)
Formed in 2001, The Observatory have confronted both the realities of life in their native Singapore and a wider global milieu through a restless succession of styles ranging from folk electronica to prog and avant rock. In their current line-up of Cheryl Ong, Yuen Chee Wai and Dharma, The Observatory have been moving into more atonal and improvised territory, teaming up with Japanese sound artist and film composer Koichi Shimizu on *Demon State*. theobservatory.com.sg, otolary.wixsite.com/koichishimizu

12
Stockhausen & The Amplified Riot
"Intubation Blues (Xiu Xiu Remix)"
From *Era Of The Inauthentic* (Artificial Head)
Starting off life as a trio of garage rock enthusiasts, Stockhausen & The Amplified Riot evolved into the solo project of Houston, Texas resident Paul Chavez, with a style shift towards post-punk and krautrock. Originally featured on the cassette release of the *Era Of The Inauthentic* EP, Xiu Xiu's remix of the album track "Intubation Blues" adds an extra kosmische twist. linktr.ee/stockandtar, artificialheadrecords.bandcamp.com

13
Lieven Martens
"Two white-tailed tropicbirds (Romantic Collection)" (excerpt)
From *Short stories – pleasant and/or rather sad* (Dauw)
Formerly the artist behind the new age/field recording project Dolphins Into The Future, Lieven Martens now creates a modern version of Romantic and impressionistic programme music. Although primarily focusing on albums and performance, Martens's music has featured in films, installations and advertising; he has co-written an operetta and composed for carillon. His collaborators include Christina Vantzou, Matthew Sage and Sugai Ken, and he also runs the Antwerp imprint Edições CN. edicoescn.bandcamp.com, dauw.bandcamp.com

14
Lines Of Silence
"Zonate Tooth Fungi"
Wire Tapper exclusive (Dimple Discs)
Lines Of Silence is the project of David Little, an alumnus of South East London's experimental scene, now relocated to Todmorden, West Yorkshire. Initially begun to explore longer form soundscapes than his work as Smallhaus, Lines Of Silence is now his main focus, creating modern psychedelia mixed with a reverence for the natural world. linesofsilence.com, dimplediscs.bandcamp.com

15
Jason Crumer
"Thin Ice"
From *Thin Ice* (Breathing Problem Productions/No Rent)
Illinois born, Philadelphia based narrative noise artist Jason Crumer has been active since the late 1990s in Aluminum Noise, facedowninshit, Reverse Baptism, Buck Young, and more. Past collaborators include Roxann Spikula, Joseph Hammer, Aaron Dilloway and Zoe Burke. Since 2002 he has been working under his own name. *Thin Ice* closes a trilogy concluding a ten album, 20 year eponymous era. breathingproblemproductions.com, norentrecords.com

16
Oiseaux-Tempête featuring Radwan Ghazi Moumneh
"Voodoo Spinning (*Wire Tapper* edit)"
From *What On Earth (Que Diable!)* (Sub Rosa/Nahal Recordings)
Not quite a collective nor a conventional group, Oiseaux-Tempête are anchored by multi-instrumentalists Frédéric D Oberland, Stéphane Pigneul and Mondkopf (Paul Régimbeau). With *What On Earth* (*Que Diable!*), Oiseaux-Tempête unfold a parallel dimension where orbital post-anything and science fiction of the now collide, gathering around Jerusalem In My Heart's Radwan Ghazi Moumneh, Ben Shemie (Suuns), Jessica Moss (Thee Silver Mt Zion) and Jean-Michel Pirès (Bruit Noir). oiseaux-tempete.com, nahalrecordings.net

The Wire Tapper 60 is given away with all copies of *The Wire* 465, November 2022. If your copy of the CD is missing or damaged, either return the magazine to where you bought it to get a replacement, or contact *The Wire*: +44 (0)20 7422 5010, subs@thewire.co.uk.

NB all subscribers to the magazine, both print and digital, can get a download of the compilation at thewire.co.uk/audio/the-wire-tapper.

Maki Abe (9); Savannah McGlothlir (12); Vera Marmelo (13); Stephen Lenman (14); Zody Burke (15); Grégoire Couvert (16)

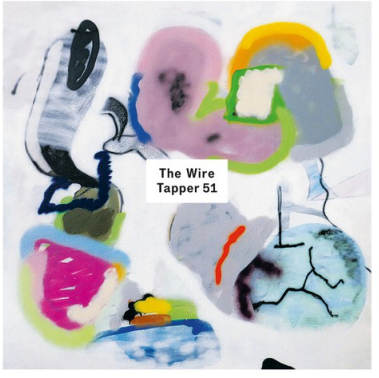
The Wire Tapper CDs + DLs

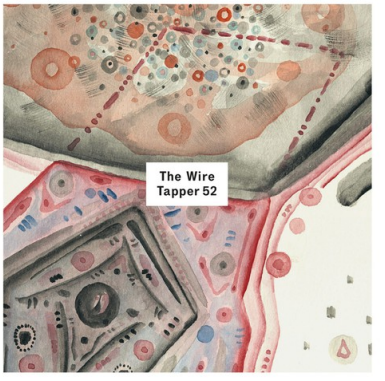
The Wire Tapper is an ongoing series of compilations of new underground music put together by *Wire* staff. The CDs are given away free three times a year with copies of *The Wire*. The first volume in the series came out in April 1998 with issue 170; the 60th volume accompanies this issue of the magazine.

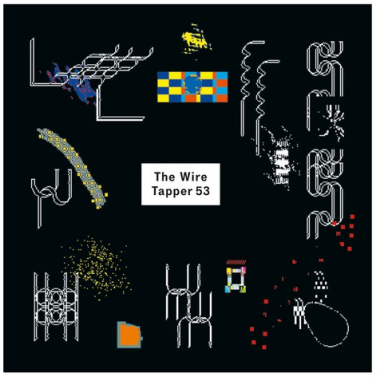
Subscribers to *The Wire* also receive each album as a download, and can download every edition of the *Tapper* since volume 25, as well as every album in our supplementary subscriber-only download series, *Below The Radar*.

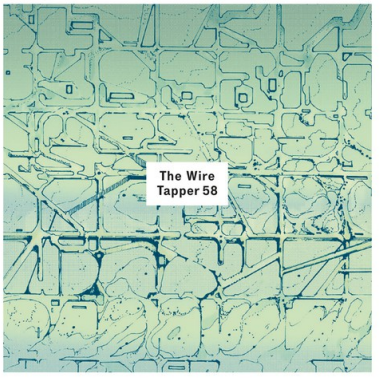
You can browse the track listings of all 60 *Wire Tapper* albums here: thewire.co.uk/audio/the-wire-tapper; then check which albums are still available with back issues of the magazine here: thewire.co.uk/issues.

For information on how to subscribe to *The Wire*, turn to page 112, or go to the wire.co.uk/subscribe.









None
New release by Magnus Bugge, out October 6th.
A machine learning based approach to deep listening, atmosphere and fidelity.
magnusbugge.bandcamp.com

The Masthead

Preparing to test new speakers on my hi-fi, I push Pharoah Sanders's otherworldly *Thembi* into the CD player. "Astral Traveling": bassist Cecil McBee's E-string hums in the lower register like the deck of a ship, and Lonnie Liston Smith's phased electric piano revolves slowly above like a constellation of stars. Over the top is Sanders's saxophone, holding long, breathy notes until they break into sensuous overtones or warm tales of breath. As he plays, it pans cosmically across the stereo spectrum – perhaps the first time these possibilities of the studio had been explored on an Impulse! album. The players do not sound in the same room as each other so much as planets orbiting in the same star system.

Sanders, who died on 24 September aged 81, was one of the towering figures of Black music of the last 60 years, and to call him just a jazz musician, improvisor or saxophonist gets nowhere near the visionary role he assumed in his music. The way I hear his playing, he rarely improvised in the lineage of tenor players like John Coltrane, Joe Henderson or Wayne Shorter, teasing out the variations and implications of one phrase or melody and carrying it forward into the next. Instead, Sanders explored spaces within the music, filling them out and making them breathe with either elemental force or infinite tenderness. My favourite Sanders piece is "Japan", just three minutes long. A loose bassline and chant are struck up by the band, using bells and other small instruments, and everyone joins in. The sense of togetherness is so intense that nothing needs to be added, and Sanders does not even need to play a note.

If Sanders was a musician who did not even perform on some of his most beautiful creations, what description could possibly sum him up? The role he assumed on his albums was somewhere between a bandleader, session producer and spiritual seer.

The discussion regarding how to label players coming out of, but transcending, jazz clubs and record labels, has been rolling in the pages of the magazine for decades. In this issue's Paul Steinbeck piece on Black composers, Paul relays how at the first meeting of the Association for Advancement of Creative Musicians, co-founder Muhal Richard Abrams declared, "We're not really jazz musicians." This month's cover artist Tyshawn Sorey, interviewed by Stewart Smith, relays Fred Lerdahl's observation when he was struggling to find his own identity as a musician: "You want your composition to be as logical and as well thought out as how you would approach an improvisation."

As Steinbeck explains in his essay, the term composer has unfortunate connotations of mastery, deriving from a division of labour in Western classical music: those who conceive of the music, versus those who are merely there to perform it. Fortunately, this distinction is being challenged from several angles. Composers, often from the sphere of Black creative music, are increasingly open to the forces of collaboration, chance and chaos in their music. Meanwhile, electronic technology has given anyone with a laptop the kind of moment to moment control and strategic planning of sound which was traditionally the composer's domain.

Composer can feel like an awkward description when music is in a state of flux and indeterminacy, or explores emotional states beyond any kind of calmness or composure. But when you factor in the sense of empowerment and liberty that the term suggests, it's only right that all musicians should be considered composers of their own little worlds. And when it comes to Sanders and Sorey, it's great to see that some creative musicians can still manage to evade all categories entirely.

This month we say goodbye to Ben Weaver, the long-serving head of our design team. Joining us is Guillaume Chuard, co-founder of Ard.works, who we welcome as our new Art Director.

Derek Walmsley

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Wilco
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***Mojo*, Reissue of the Month**

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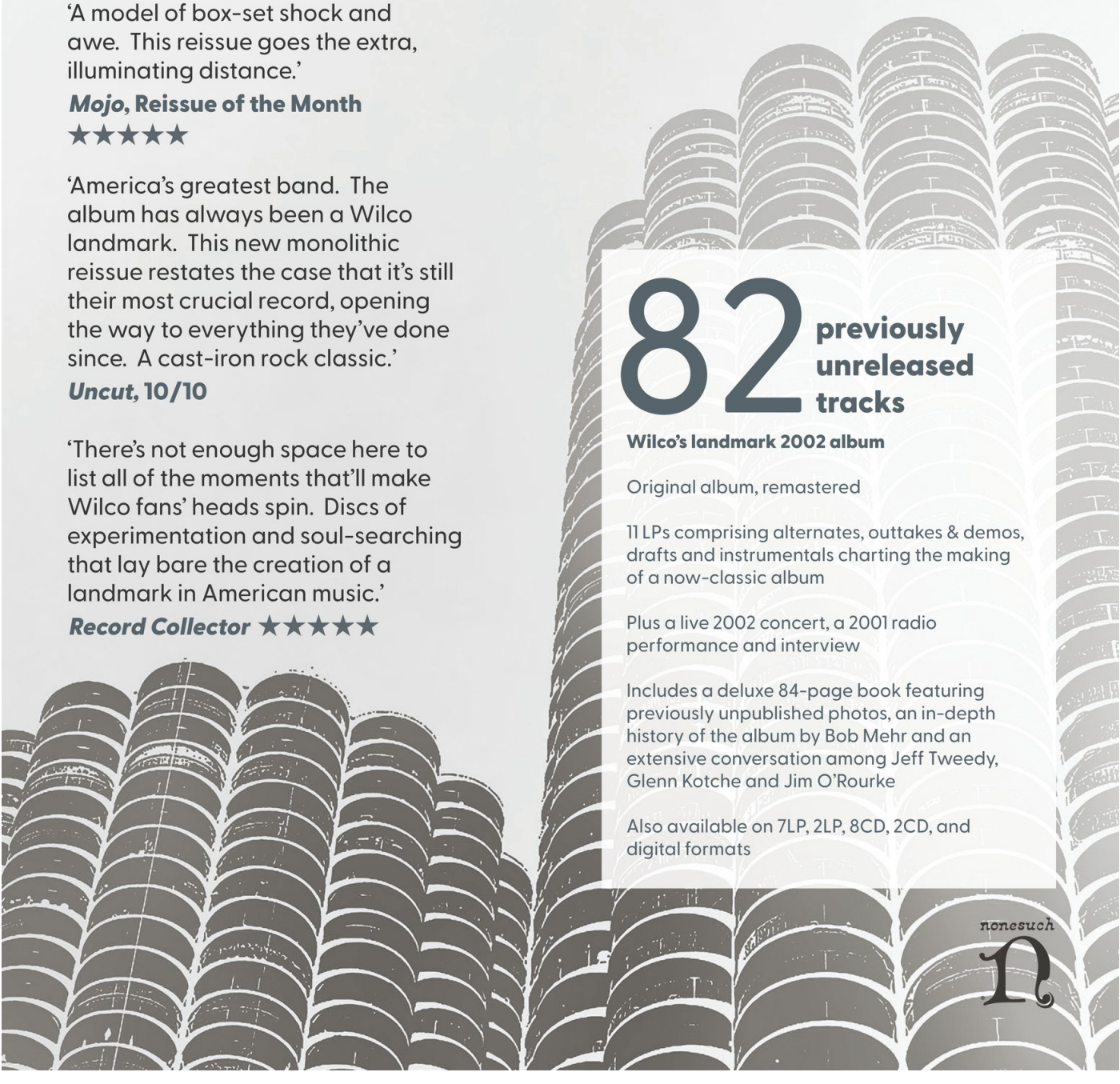
***Uncut*, 10/10**

'There's not enough space here to list all of the moments that'll make Wilco fans' heads spin. Discs of experimentation and soul-searching that lay bare the creation of a landmark in American music.'

Record Collector ★★★★★



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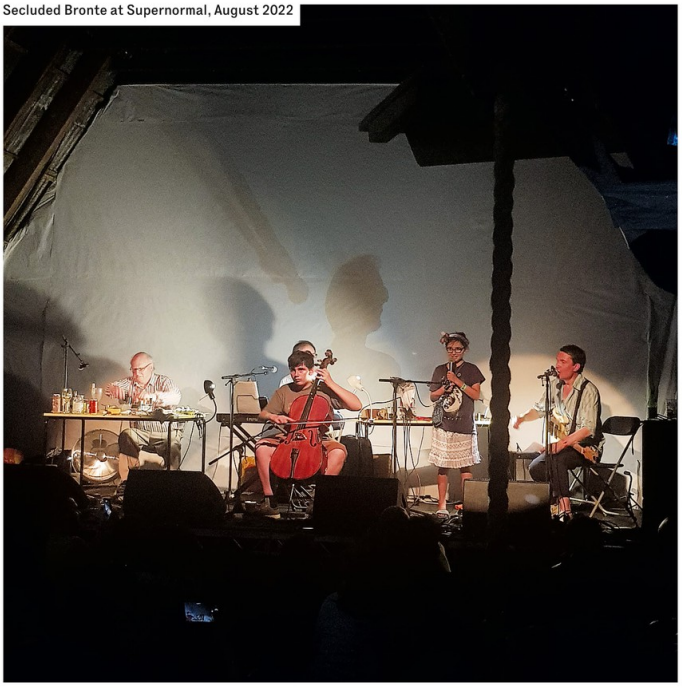
Letters

Secluded Bronte at Supernormal, August 2022



Hidden depths

Thank you for referencing Secluded Bronte in the On Location review of the Supernormal festival [*The Wire* 464]: "Secluded Bronte experiment with found text and cut-ups to tap into the surrealism of the everyday." However, despite the overall generosity of that gesture there's a slight problem with it in that I feel the reference misrepresents what we did and do. Obviously that was not the intention, but nonetheless it may lead to a skewed perception of our project. And perception is obviously a key point for us.

As a totally independent self-managed group – we have no record label, no publisher, no press agent, no booking agent, no budget, much risk – trying to get work, particularly live shows, is often hard. One of the primary reasons is how the group is perceived. All too often it's presumed what we do is some form of post-Cage non-idiomatic free improvisation with text. This is really not the case.

The format for the concert at Supernormal, that your correspondent didn't see or hear, consisted of 12 songs, five of which were instrumental. The music was punctuated by four short black and white 16mm films by James Holcombe. Materially the music was performed on guitar, keyboards and synthesizer, home made string instruments, objects and percussion with prerecorded rhythmic elements and other sounds playing back from a laptop. For the final number Xena Holcombe (aged ten) and Hugo Holcombe (aged 14) joined us on vocals and cello respectively.

I have no idea how to describe this music beyond dry technical details. But what I can say is that the numbers are observant of pop form; they are by and large two to three minutes in duration, melodic, have hooks and are syncopated.

In terms of lyrics I am the principle writer and seldom do I use found texts or cut-ups when writing lyrics. The songs with lyrics ranged from a 'to the gallows' tune about having a mean time in Greenwich, a song from the POV of a guy going out with a girl called Tuesday who will only see him on a Thursday, and a song about a time traveling bandit. Adam Bohman's contributions to the group, usually one or two text pieces, often use found material and cut-ups. However, he approaches texts from an almost OuLiPo angle, so a mathematical logic is at work even if it is not apparent.

Supernormal was a great thing to do and a real breakthrough for the group (a recording of the performance is available at fforddallan.bandcamp.com/album/live-at-supernormal). We had a full house and people were being turned away at the door. This was remarkable in less than ideal conditions (35 degrees), and musically and structurally our plan 100 per cent worked. I am keen to expand on that, hence the need for clarity about the project. We are available for work.

Richard Thomas Secluded Bronte, via email

Critical distance

Gabriel Bristow's review of Blank Forms' book of the four issues of *The Cricket* published between 1968–69 was informative, but insufficiently critical of the ideas that *The Cricket* propounded [Print Run, *The Wire* 464]. As an example, Bristow references the authors' concern at the division of Black music along class lines, without stopping to consider whether *The Cricket*'s promotion of the ideal of a homogenous Black nation might not itself lead to such division.

Bristow fails to situate what he calls the "youthful" proto-ideology of the magazine's editors historically. He references the influence of Maulana Karenga over Amiri Baraka, and Baraka's mockery of the Black Panther Party. But why it is of interest is effaced by critical timidity. Karenga and his US Organisation were funded by the Los Angeles Police Department and directed by the FBI, as part of its COINTELPRO programme, to engage in armed conflict with the BPP. The US Organisation was implicated in the murder of four BPP members. Cultural nationalism was considered by the FBI as a useful distraction from the revolutionary politics of the BPP. Better Karenga's campaign for a new Black holiday than the overthrow of capitalism.

Not all of the "ideological fault lines along which the music moved" were equally innocent of reactionary purpose (Karenga was convicted in 1971 of the torture and false imprisonment of women members of the US Organisation). The problem with approaching the conflicting ideologies of the 1960s and 70s with studied neutrality is that the critic is then unable to examine the real impact of those ideologies, or detail how some 'activists' of that era were able to broker their call for a specifically 'cultural' revolution into places at the table within institutions which themselves had power and control over access to culture, democracy and resources for the Black working class.

Nick Moss via email

Corrections

Issue 464 In On Site, the dates covered by the Alison Knowles retrospective should have been listed as 1960–2022. In the Carl Stone feature, *Gall Tones* was made in November 2021. In the Derek Piotr feature, the location he visited was Elk Park. In Soundcheck, the Bitchin Bajas track is "Quakenbrück".

We welcome letters from readers. Write to us at letters@thewire.co.uk. Letters may be edited.

Hogge

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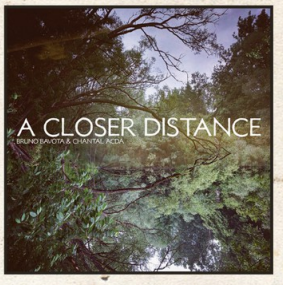

BRUNO BAVOTA & CHANTAL ACDA
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The Italian composer collaborates with the acclaimed Dutch singer-songwriter on this magical collection of intricate and intimate works.

MONO *My Story, The Buraku Story*
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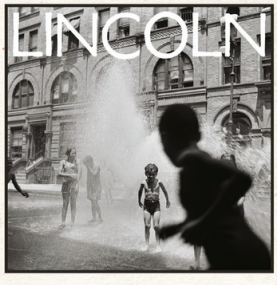

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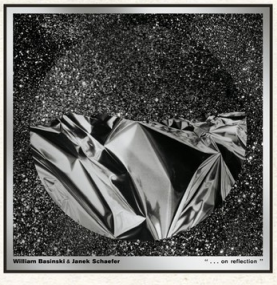

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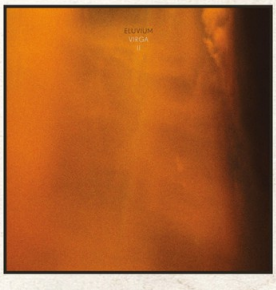

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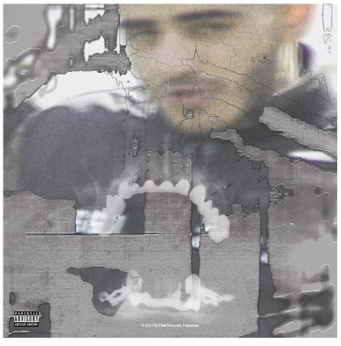
Unlimited Editions

Palestinian hiphop label **BLTNM** finds solidarity in its West Bank home as it taps into sounds from across the Arab world. By **Nihal ElAasar**



Daboor, *Inn Ann* (2021)

Shabjdeed & Al Nather, *Ya Ali* (2021)

After the resounding popularity of "Inn Ann", Ramallah based hiphop label BLTNM finds itself in an exciting but critical position. The track, by Daboor featuring Shabjdeed, became an anthem of the May 2021 uprising in Palestine. ""Inn Ann" changed our lives," co-founder and producer Al Nather says. The imprint, founded in 2015 in the West Bank by creative director and audio engineer Shabmouri, producer Al Nather, and rapper and songwriter Shabjdeed, has grown to be almost 15 people strong, and their members feel a sense of responsibility to each other. "We see ourselves as a family," Shabmouri tells me.

But to pigeonhole BLTNM as only doing resistance music or protest rap would be doing them a disservice. The label is political only in the sense that you aren't afforded the luxury of avoiding politics if you're born Palestinian. Struggle and resistance are included in the themes of the music, but so are joy, love, humour, fun, innovation and experimentation, all themes that make up the diversity of the BLTNM catalogue so far. "We want to be seen as artists," declare Al Nather and Shabmouri, "multidimensional artists with range."

The BLTNM style, although diverse, is more solid and cohesive than that of the vibrant hiphop scene in the wider Arab world, which often sees artists rise to stardom, sign brand deals and achieve commercial success before their sound has fully matured. After Shabjdeed's 2019 debut album *Sindibad El Ward*, audiences became acquainted with BLTNM's leftfield bass and trap sound, imbued with drill influences on songs like "Mtaktak" that could easily find a home on UK radio. However, unlike other hiphop releases in the region, it doesn't sound like an imitation. "I made trap beats using a minor scale, which is also an Arabic scale," says Al Nather, adding that the decision to not merely borrow existing Western genres was intentional.

While the record label is still young – its Bandcamp page numbers around 30 EPs, singles and albums at present – each release feels deliberate and intentional with distinctive cover art. "We like to give every artist the time and attention they deserve with every release," says Shabmouri. Listeners get acquainted with the artists as they absorb each new release. After the label introduced Fawzi in 2021, I remember hearing "Kilmeh" from his EP *2000* in a friend's car in Cairo, and knowing instantly that it was a BLTNM release.

Being located in Ramallah is both a blessing and a curse. The label is not afforded the kind of mainstream resources of brand deals, access and commercial success that some hiphop artists seek, and they also face the additional challenges to their liberty of movement and reach that come with having a base in Palestine. However, that has afforded them something else, the ability to zone in and hone their craft. "For every song we put out, hundreds remain unreleased," explains Shabmouri. "I listen to music 24/7, I feel we have a responsibility to listen to everything."

Both Shabmouri and Al Nather emphasise the rich historical tradition of Palestinian and Arab music, and they list musical influences from Egypt, Syria and Iraq, as well as Arabic poetry. "I feel like Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese and North African cultures are my own cultures as well," states Al Nather, explaining connections in the Arab world that may be lost on Western audiences. "We want the BLTNM sound to tap into those traditions that influenced us."

Recent releases show that the record label is serious about embracing this Arab identity. Imbued with influences from Iraq and Palestinian traditional music, Shabjdeed's single "Ya Ali" is an example, signifying one of the biggest shifts in sound since the record label started. The recent EP *R3D* sees Al Nather sampling Egyptian singer and songwriter Aida El-Ayoubi in the song "Ramadan".

The label says it is just getting started, with serious plans to scale operations and sign artists outside of Palestine. They also talk of new releases exploring "Arab futurism" or "Arab neo-synth wave". The label meanwhile are beginning to making moves in Europe, with a date at London's EartH venue scheduled for this autumn. ☐ bltnm.com, bltnm.bandcamp.com

Unofficial Channels

No Choice Records

When his label Ultra Eczema reached 49 releases, the Antwerp based artist and musician Dennis Tyfus commemorated the milestone with a concept release – he got the catalogue number UE50 tattooed on his knuckles. He asked his tattooist Alba Maff how much he owed her. "She didn't want money," says Tyfus. "She wanted me to tattoo her with her gun, and not tell her what I'd tattoo."

Before long, Tyfus had acquired his own tattoo gun and had invented the concept of No Choice tattoos: off the cuff images placed on the skin of willing strangers. "I thought of these tattoos as a visual version of an improvised concert, where one uses the limitations of space and who you are dealing with to create a new piece," he explains. To date, he's done over a thousand, and soon the No Choice idea was spilling into other creative pursuits: a festival, in which the instruments musicians play is determined by bingo balls; a bar, in which if you don't like your drink, you can exchange it with a stranger. And now, perhaps inevitably, a new label – No Choice Records.

The label began with a manifesto, defining its parameters. A No Choice Record release is "anonymous", "does not have a catalogue number", "contains no information about its contents". But there are other clauses too, designed to deliberately subvert conventional label logic. A No Choice Records release "always arrives as intended… there is no such thing as a damaged sleeve, a bent corner or a broken record."

And while he's happy to receive demos, what you hear may bear only a limited resemblance to what was submitted: "A No Choice Records release might contain a version – or many – of a demo that has been subjected to various treatments or even entirely rerecorded by No Choice Records personnel, whether professionals in the field of music or random amateurs." No Choice records should be considered bootlegs, adds Tyfus, so are not eligible for sale on Discogs.

No Choice Records feels like a welcome injection of chaos into an underground music market that, with its deluxe packaging and heavyweight presses, can sometimes swing close to commodity fetishism. But Tyfus is serious about the endeavour. There are around ten No Choice releases in the works, all of which will be available direct from the label.

You might like what you hear. You might not. Most importantly, you'll have no idea what you're getting. "At best it works like a birthday present," says Tyfus. "At worst you despise what is on the record and simply get rid of it on the streets." ☐ ultraeczema.com

Louis Pattison

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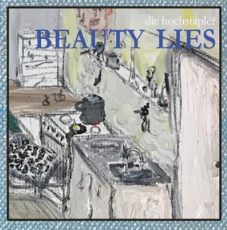
umlautrecords.bandcamp.com or umlautrecords.com

The Strange Adventures of Jesper Klint
Oûat plays Per Henrik Wallin
Simon Sieger | Joel Grip | Michael Griener
2LP / digital (November 2022)



Beauty Lies
Die Hochstapler
Louis Laurain | Pierre Borel | Antonio Borghini | Hannes Lingens
CD / digital (September 2022)

Within
Die Hochstapler
Louis Laurain | Pierre Borel | Antonio Borghini | Hannes Lingens
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Unbelievable Weather
Eponj
Marie Takahashi | Anil Eraslan | Antonio Borghini
digital (September 2022)

Elastic Bricks
Oûat
Simon Sieger | Joel Grip | Michael Griener
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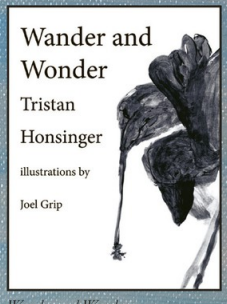
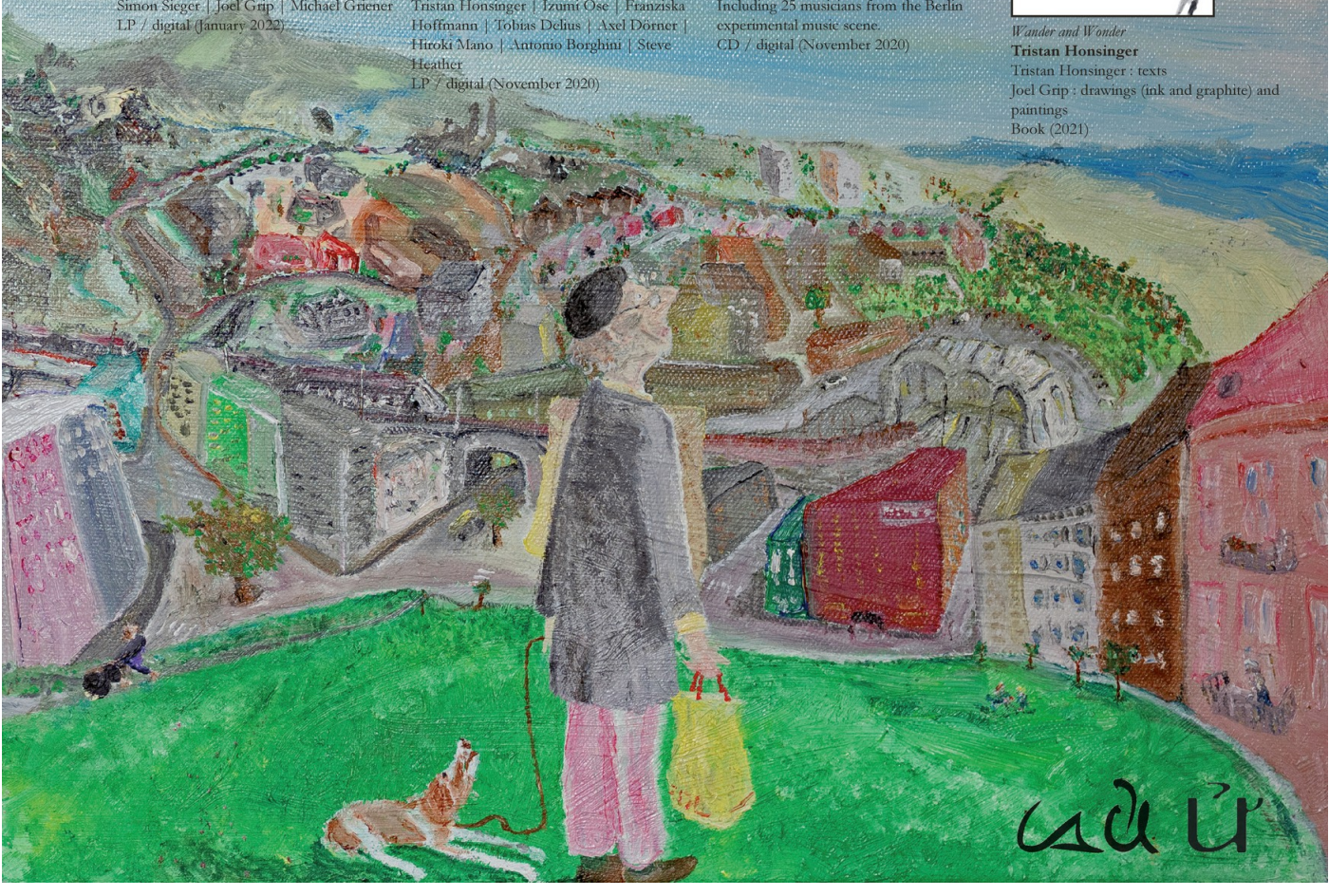
Tristan Honsinger's Hopscotch
Tristan Honsinger | Izumi Ose | Franziska Hoffmann | Tobias Delius | Axel Dörner | Hiroki Mano | Antonio Borghini | Steve Heather
LP / digital (November 2020)

When Will Never Meet
Alexis Baskind & Antonio Borghini
Including 25 musicians from the Berlin experimental music scene.
CD / digital (November 2020)



Wander and Wonder
Tristan Honsinger
Tristan Honsinger : texts
Joel Grip : drawings (ink and graphite) and paintings
Book (2021)



oûat

Fluid Dynamics

Over a 40 year career, composer **Andrew Poppy** stretches wordplay and genre in ways both viscous and fluid. By **Leah Kardos.** Photography by **Jack Symes**

"There are four pieces on *The Beating Of Wings*, each in a different world, with completely different types of production. Nearly 40 years later it feels like an album, but actually back then I was frustrated it didn't feel like an album enough. I haven't ever been able to get away from that." Andrew Poppy is reflecting on the diversity of his catalogue, evident since his album debut on Trevor Horn and Paul Morley's Zang Tumb Tuum label (ZTT) in 1985. He chalks it up to "composers want[ing] to explore different textures, different voices".

Different textures puts it rather mildly. We're talking about a body of work that includes symphonic and chamber works, concertos, operas, oratorios and musical theatre, dance and film soundtracks, experimental pop production, remixes and notable collaborations with bands like Erasure, Nitzer Ebb and Psychic TV.

On his new album *JELLY*, we hear the composer performing a set of songs on his own for the first time. It's an intriguing project: five tracks, each roughly 12 minutes long, with an electronic sound with nods towards minimal techno, claustrophobic triphop and drone. Poppy's unique, lucid-poetic delivery is a style that has developed from tracks like "XY Song" from 2019's *Hoarse Songs* and before that, "Do The Flip" from 2012's *Shiny Floor Shiny Ceiling*. At the same time, he is releasing a four volume archive of live recordings from throughout his career – *Ark Hive Of A Live* covers a wide range of one-off and commissioned pieces that have not been accessible in audio form until now.

The coincident releases were not planned that way. "We were trying to keep them apart, but they've ended up synchronising," says Poppy. "A version of *Ark Hive* happened when I released those recordings in lockdown on my Bandcamp. It was a way of saying, I've been working for four decades, where are we now, the world's about to end."

Yet the proximity of these projects calls attention to the composer's legacy, moving between styles and modes of engagement. "It's about being a composer or a performer, but more crucially how they interface with record production. It's been a theme for me."

When I ask where the *JELLY* title comes from, he turns the question back to me. The word makes me think about something that's solid, but also fluid and perhaps a gloopy state in between the two. "Yeah, it's in some kind of transitional state so you can form it into something. In some ways it's what creativity is. Seeing things as material, malleable and potential for becoming something new."

The idea reminds him of a recent concert he attended, the GBSR duo performing Stockhausen's *Kontakte* at the multi-storey carpark venue in Peckham, London. "It sent me right back to the late 60s. I remember being inspired by the way [Stockhausen] handled materials: recording sine tone, noises, splicing it all together. That it could be music. Amazing. Now it seems that he was struggling with the relationship between recorded sound to the performance space and the playing of instruments. A piece like *Kontakte* manages to hold those various ideas together very successfully. It's a fragile balancing act."

One can sense a similar balancing act happening across the *Ark Hive* set, which draws attention to music in various states – scores, performances, recorded documents that, in some places, have been further tweaked in post-production. "Sometimes the recording of live performance can be quite disappointing as a listening experience. Even though they might be quite good performances. And there's lots of reasons for that. But as every sound engineer and producer knows, there are ways you can focus the experience for the listener. So why wouldn't you?"

Another recurring theme in Poppy's work has been his penchant for word play, from the alternate title options for *The Beating Of Wings* (1985) suggested in the cover artwork (*The Seating Of Kings/The Cheating Of Things*) and 1987's text-driven *Alphabed* (*A Mystery Dance*), his second ZTT release, to pieces like 1997's *Mouthing The Words* (included on *Ark Hive*) and the recent run of albums focusing more on song forms. "I started to mess with words and sounds back then in the late 60s and it hasn't stopped," he says, adding, "Dave Meegan who mixed *Alphabed* also mixed *JELLY*. There's a logic there. So "Goodbye Mr G" [from *Alphabed*] is some kind of pre-echo.

"Language has always been a big part of things," he continues. "There's a level of abstraction that is possible in language that is very exciting when it's on the cusp of something." On *JELLY*, the texts sometimes draw from poetic forms. For instance, "A General Choosing" borrows repetitions from sestina verse form, "a rigorous patterning of six repeated words. There is a rhythmic play, with a whole word as some kind of object. Like 'the grandmother' and 'the child' that circle each other in Elizabeth Bishop's *Sestina*." The final track "On The Back Of The Seat In Front Of Me" plays with ekphrasis, a poetic technique where one text reflectively narrates another. Here, Poppy plays with the images and words that feature on the sleeve of *The Beating Of Wings*.

The way Poppy's work engages with itself across practices, formats and across time suggests that these releases have more qualities in common than there might seem to be on the surface. "Yes, probably we've identified a theme here. They muse on the relationship of recording to performance, and the performer to the audience." Or the transitional movements between all of these things? "Yes, like being in or moving through a landscape." ☐ Andrew Poppy's *JELLY* is released by Field Radio. *Ark Hive Of A Live* is released by False Walls

Tomeka Reid on CvsD

Tomeka Reid/Fred Lonberg-Holm
Eight Pieces for Two Cellos

Sinuous string duets featuring compositions by both performers as well as cello-oriented historical figures Sam Jones, Ron Carter, Fred Katz and Harry Babasin. Recorded direct-to-stereo. Cover painting by FLH.

Joe McPhee/Tomeka Reid
Let Our Rejoicing Rise

Recorded live on Juneteenth, 2021, McPhee kicks off with two powerful poems, straight into a single tremulous tenor/cello duet interpolating a fragment from "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the so-called Black National Anthem, from which the title is extracted. Cover image by Gee's Bend quilter Mary Lee Bendolph.

Photo
©Cristina Marx/Photomusix

CORBETT vs. DEMPSEY

Casting Out Demons

Rapper and producer **Backxwash** mines horror aesthetics and religious imagery in her cathartic mix of beats and doom. By **Emily Pothast.** Photography by **Méchant Vaporwave**

There is a moment in one of the tracks on Backxwash's upcoming album *HIS HAPPINESS SHALL COME FIRST EVEN THOUGH WE ARE SUFFERING* where voices seem to creep in from every corner of the stereo field. Listening on headphones, it sounds like someone is whispering over my shoulder, but when I turn around no one's there. I tell Ashanti Mutinta about this haunting over a Zoom connection and she instantly knows which song I'm talking about.

It's called "MUZUNGU", and like the other tracks I've been lucky enough to hear from this work in progress, it's masterfully self-produced and seething with righteous rage. The title means white person in Nyanja, a native language of Zambia, where the Montreal based artist was born and raised. The lyrics map the her own trauma onto the ghastly violence of centuries of colonial history, weaving religious imagery with thundering beats, visceral textures and a sample of Malcolm X imploring his audience to ask themselves: *"Who taught you to hate being what God made you?"* .

Although Mutinta considers herself "pretty much anti-religion", her raps are rich with Biblical allusions, repurposing fragments of ancient stories with the same deftness that she handles samples. "I grew up really religious", she reveals. "I used to study the Bible every day, so I think it's just remnants of that." In her solo work as Backxwash, demons surface in a way that transcends a tidy binary. "I think a lot of it is relating to my personal struggles. It's like light versus evil, but you don't know which one is light and which one is evil, or if there even is a light or evil."

The use of themes and aesthetics mined from horror is another vestige of Mutinta's early influences, from the Nollywood (Nigerian) movies she grew up watching to the hallucinogenic horrorcore of artists like Esham, Cage and DMX. "Back in Zambia, you would get, like, pirated CDs, or somebody would come with an album on USB, and that's how you would discover music," she laughs. "Nobody was actually going out there and buying CDs unless you really really liked the project. I remember the first tape that I bought was Craig David, *Born To Do It* – I cherished that album so much, front to back."

Around age ten, Mutinta started writing her own lyrics, using a tape recorder with a microphone to record herself rapping over instrumental tracks by other artists. Later, she discovered Linkin Park. "That's when the world started opening up because I really liked hiphop," she declares, "but I was also interested in harsher sounds and textures." Around that same time, she got her first copy of the digital audio workstation FL Studio, which enabled her to start building beats. But the possibility of being a professional musician was not something she took seriously. "Back home, nobody really wants to hear you say that you want to be a musician. People have to think a bit more strategically since there's just a lot more poverty there."

It was not until 2017, when Mutinta arrived in Montreal and became involved in the city's rap scene, that she began to prioritise her own music-making. "There was this spot called Le Cypher. I liked the raps I was writing and I needed somewhere to practice them, so I used to go there and I would know if the rhyme was dope based on the crowd reaction."

During this time Mutinta came out as transgender. "I had thought that I was cis because growing up, that's what people used to tell me," she says. "The idea of exploring myself as another gender was already eliminated before I could even ask that question. I used to dress up as a girl because I thought it was, like, funny, but there was something much deeper there as well. And then you hear from people that have that experience that the reason why so many trans people are oppressed back home is because some of this stuff is precolonial. And then you find out that some tribes had trans people, and they had queer people."

For Mutinta, gender was a catalyst that made her examine other things she had previously taken for granted, like religion. "The moment I took the step to say, 'I'm not cis,' I had already gone out to the deep end, so I might as well question other stuff, and that's how the unravelling started to happen."

In many ways, the discography of Backxwash can be seen (or heard) as a chronicle of that unravelling, a journey of sonic self-discovery which currently culminates in her 2020 LP *God Has Nothing To Do With This Leave Him Out Of It* and its cathartic follow-up, 2021's *I LIE HERE BURIED WITH MY RINGS AND MY DRESSES*. On the cover art for the latter, Mutinta is wearing her distinctive reverse corpse paint makeup, which she also wears in the video for "Bite Back" by Algiers, on which she has a featured verse. This look was created by her artistic director Méchant Vaporwave (aka Chachi Revah), who also serves as the recording engineer for her vocals. I ask if the makeup constitutes a kind of persona. "I guess at the beginning, maybe I thought so, but I think it's more of an expression than a persona," she replies. "When I go up on stage with that makeup on, I'm meaning every word I say." ☐ Backxwash's *HIS HAPPINESS SHALL COME FIRST EVEN THOUGH WE ARE SUFFERING* is released via Ugly Hag

Time is Away *Ballads*
The duo's unique mode of storytelling culminates in their first officially licensed compilation. Out soon.
a colourful storm

Talking Drums

In a series of encounters with percussionists, saxophonist **Xhosa Cole** gets to the heart of the rhythmic languages of the Black avant garde. By **Francis Gooding.** Photography by **Chris Neophytou**

"I've always known that percussionists are in very many ways the truth-tellers of this music," says saxophonist Xhosa Cole, talking from his home city Birmingham over a slightly choppy Zoom connection. "Although they don't often get a platform to verbalise or vocalise their concepts, or their understanding of their instruments, their cultures, heritage, their relationship to improvisation, or to sound production, stuff like this. It's always saxophonists and pianists that seem to get the talky-talky bit. So I very much wanted to connect with these guys."

Cole is expounding on the various considerations that led to *Ibeji*, his forthcoming album on Stoney Lane, the adventurous Birmingham imprint that hosted his acclaimed 2021 quintet excursion *K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us*. The latter record was a crisply assured run at a grip of infrequently touched gems from the grandmasters of the music: Thelonious Monk's "Played Twice #1", Woody Shaw's "Zoltan", numbers from Lee Morgan, Ornette Coleman and others.

Ibeji might seem to be at the other end of the spectrum: it's a collection of intimate saxophone and percussion duets, interleaved with recorded conversations with his accompanying drummers and percussion players, spiced here and there with squalling electronics and busy overdubs. There is not a canonical jazz composer in sight. But to say it was really different would be a superficial reading: Cole is interested in the deep material that lies beneath the whole sonic tradition of the Black diaspora, the jazz canon included. Hence his turn to the voices and rhythms of those he describes as the truth-tellers: those who hold and pass along the fundamentals.

"The first record [*K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us*] is very much paying homage to the schooling that I've come up through, which is bop schooling, basically, through the likes of [Sonny] Rollins, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, and so on," says Cole. "But I've been very lucky to experience a very wide breadth of music… so I always knew for the second record, I was hoping to reflect a lot of the different musics that I engage in and learn from, and that represent different elements of the cultures and the communities that I'm connected with, both musically and heritage wise."

The record features duets with seven drum and percussion musicians who have been key influences and musical mentors – Ian Parmel of Birmingham's ACE dance company; jazz drummer Jason Brown; Brazilian percussionist Adriano Adewale; celebrated improvising musician Mark Sanders; Xhosa's brother, Azizi Cole; exploratory multi-instrumentalist and composer Corey Mwamba; and Yoruban master drummer Lekan Babalola. Most of them are also present as interviewees, not only talking to Cole about drums and rhythm, but also about their own pathways in music and life. "When I started conceptualising the record, it very much came from a place of wanting to celebrate seven individuals who I think are world class musicians," he explains. "And I wanted to celebrate their musicianship and the fact that they've given me so much. But what became very clear as the project developed, was that this concept was more about…"

He pauses, seeking a metaphor. "If you imagine a sculpture in the centre of a room and seven different lenses giving their perspective on it. So we're celebrating Black music, music of African heritage and African origin. And even though that's got to be vastly different from one angle than another angle, we're very much looking at the same thing."

While the initial idea had simply been for a series of musical encounters, Cole found there was so much knowledge being shared during the sessions, he felt a verbal element was also necessary: "I was getting so many insights from our conversations that I knew it was integral that I archive these to some degree. So we condensed about 15 hours worth of interviews into what you hear on the record, which reflects on lots of different themes. So we're talking about codes, ancestors, masks, rituals, the diaspora… we did touch a little bit on race, although the record isn't in relationship to whiteness, its rather about the essence of this diasporic music. For me, there's these deep roots that all of us have… we were able to share from the same foundation and the same roots."

The result is rich and singular. Cole's duo exchanges with each guest are marked by elegance and curiosity, as he uses a musical language drawn from bop to thoughtfully explore and question the complex rhythmic spaces, pulses and resonances provided by his collocutors. In turn, his guests provide everything from personal reminiscence to secret knowledge, stitching and restitching a tapestry of memory and sound that draws the listener from West Africa to the Caribbean and US, then back across the Atlantic to London and Birmingham.

Despite the fact that Cole's tenor is the thread that runs consistently through the weave of *Ibeji*, it's not all about him. Instead, it's about the constant rhythmic forces that have informed the music that flows through his instrument, and the ways that percussion has consistently been the medium of cultural preservation and resistance to oppression, encoding knowledge and culture within what Babalola calls the "pin-codes" of rhythm. All this, as Cole knows, is brought out and passed on through conversations, whether verbal or musical.

"The dialogue between two people is just so rich," he says. "The deepest learning happens for me in a duo context. I find so much joy and love in that one-to-one communication." □ Xhosa Cole's *Ibeji* is released by Stoney Lane. He performs the album at the London Jazz Festival this month: see Out There

Things to discuss at the Next Festival in Bratislava 2022

Hi friends, thank you so much for inviting me, unfortunetley – it was last minut and the train tickets became so expesive that it was impossible for me to get to you, so I send this text, and hope that you sweet and wonderfull people will have a fantastic festival and descussion.

Especially on the Internet!

01. Physical Wars is SHIT and only people dealing whit money, power and the destruction of the planet benefits from it. join fredsvagten

Also toughts on: Resonancen Technology – Re.: Søsterhøj Mysteriet

Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla Bla Bla. Bla. Bla.
Bla. Bla. Bla. the agressors of any confilct as they are, just as bad as yourself.
Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla.
Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla.

In the tern of Energy-problems, global Warming and the youth realising that NFT's is and was a BIG Joke
Could the computer World and the computer arts,
benefit from Experiments and advancements in Hydraulik? HYDRO KOMPUTING

02. Modern computer music is 100% not about hove it sounds, but hove it is Distributed – let's for a second or more discuss advancements in Distribution, as the descussion of sound quality and composition is a thing for: INA GRM

- let's also talk: V/Vm a bit, yes why not?

Will Greta Thunberg and that chaos methode might create a new Komputer music?

Cars Suck, Bjørn Svin said it in 1997 and it's still true

03. The REAL outsides will stay outsides, no matter hove many rulls there is made to protect them.
STAY FREAKY – and LOVE freak friendships – in ART as much as your daily life!

interdimentionality
also in vision and sound

- your DAILY LIFE is ART when you live it right!

04. UFO's and Aliens is tearms made to remove your belive from the underworld and outerworlds.
The others have always been here and has always been a part of you and me - and the way we evolve.

Why dos some people make fun of people Living and beliving in/w. ghosts?

05. N.B. _Do NOT belive in what people at discussion Panels tells you, they are often wrong just by being there.

most people have something to say for the wrong reasons

NOW YOU KNOW

06. Globality is over, bla. bla. bla. dream.

bla. bla. blæ bla blæ bla bla bla blæ blaæ blaæ. bla bla bla. bla. bla
bll bla bal blæa bla. bla. bla. bla bla. bla. bla. bla. bla.

- LOVE Rules…

feel more then sorry for people send to wars for stupid idelogies and bad income.

N.B.

07. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla. Bla.
but has a personalety there is complicated. Is complications in modern art a go or no-go?
- let's also discuss modern times, was this years Documenta a sucess?
I personally belive that it was – why was people against it?
- Is there any rights to be so?

BANANSKOLEN
Strejker grundet
Ildelugtende ledelse
af: DEN FRIE

08. Knowledge, can die if the channels it is distributed true is not guarded by LOVE – this is real DUB
- Why most Euro Art institutions is rendered useless, and what to do about it?

17 CT 400

09. The Goodiepal music is shit!
The Goodiepal and Pals Music is even more SHIT
and The Bananskole is just unspeakably bad, So - maybe join Bananskol'en if you fancy?

Oh and Bleetup From Bleachdon Wip Great..

Have a Great Festival – my dear friends!

komponistbasen.dk/node/8812
(A New Website)

The Goodiepal of Bananskolen Lxxp 14/18

P.S. if my friend: Márton Bertók shows up, please be good to him -He is much better then me in any respect.

Percussionist **Camille Émaille** evokes the fluidity of metal and landscapes in her compositions and collaborations. By **Clive Bell.** Photography by **Chloé Milos Azzopardi**

Elemental Forge

French percussionist Camille Émaille grew up amid the dramatic canyons and prolific wildlife of the Mercantour national park, north of Nice. After a brief dalliance with a drum kit, she found herself drawn to contemporary composed music, studying demanding pieces for tuned percussion by Salvatore Sciarrino, Peter Eötvös and John Zorn. "I moved to Strasbourg," she tells me. "I met a lot of more traditional musicians and we played in the streets. I was at the Conservatoire but not very happy there – I think it was more the musicians I met who were important, and not my studies."

The thing you realise as soon as you start to research Émaille is that she is involved in a quite dizzying variety of projects. She brings many of those projects to London in October for her three day residency at Cafe Oto. For example, the trio OTTO, where three drummers all play Bulgarian tapan drums, slung around their necks.

Some of the threads of her career can be traced back to guitarist Fred Frith, scheduled to accompany her at Oto, alongside bass clarinettist Hans Koch and electric guitarist Nina Garcia.

"I studied improvising before knowing what free improvisation is," she recalls. "At Basel I studied contemporary music, and I met Fred Frith there. He was teaching improvisation. Some of his classes were open to all the students and I went along. One day he told me, 'Don't you want to study with [percussionist] William Winant?' Because Fred was teaching in Mills College, so he arranged that I was invited as a scholar guest, for one semester. There I studied with Willie and Fred and Roscoe Mitchell. But I never integrated into the improvisation class. I was not very comfortable with the idea of having an improvisation degree, or whatever."

I'm intrigued. What does it mean, studying improvisation with Roscoe Mitchell? "So the class with Roscoe was a big group," Émaille says. "Roscoe was always telling us: work on something, and then when we meet you present your work. He was pushing us to find our own way to do music, not especially [to be] good at improvising. At the time I was there, Roscoe was more interested in writing music, like transcribing improvisation into pieces, and then orchestrating them. So he was really open – just bring something to the class. The first day I was in the class, they had already started. I arrived from France. Roscoe was like, OK, You're new, so play solo for us, so we know who you are. So I had to play solo in front of a whole lot of musicians I didn't know. And Roscoe Mitchell. Maybe I realised, OK, be less self-conscious.

"Where I come from," she continues, "the classical background, you practise and you play the piece to the teacher and he's telling you that's good, it's not good. But when you improvise you should forget about pleasing your teacher. I was thinking, am I doing this right or wrong? And that was a big thing to get rid of. In the class with Fred for example, he was like, man you're just too conscious of yourself and what you're doing, and when you get rid of that you'll be fine. Also Roscoe said something very interesting: if you want to play a solo concert for half an hour, practice so you can play a solo for three hours. Then maybe when you go to the concert, half an hour will be good music."

Émaille's first visit to Cafe Oto in 2019 was at the invitation of Peter Brötzmann. "That's a funny story," she smiles, "I met Peter in Chile. I was there playing with Ensemble Vertebrae from Strasbourg. I like hiking, and I wanted to go hiking in Patagonia, so I was looking for mountain equipment. Someone in Valparaiso said I have a friend, he has this and that you can borrow. Then he asked me, 'what are you doing?' I said I'm playing with this contemporary ensemble. He said, 'Ah, but you also do improvisation? I am organising an improvisation festival. Do you want to play in that?' So he put me on stage before [Brötzmann trio] Full Blast, and Peter Brötzmann heard me playing and he invited me to Cafe Oto."

This in turn led to *Belisama: The Metal Roots*, Émaille's hour long album for Cafe Oto's Takuroku label in 2021. Belisama is a Celtic goddess protecting people who work with metal or who make metal tools. It's accompanied by a poem by Émaille: *"Find curved ancestors above the earth/Going back to their home. My home. Inside myself/Pur and grainy. Saturated/The calmness of metal. Massiv stability/A guardian of fire and time. Belisama"*.

"My interest was to work with these materials," she explains, "it has a lot of softness as well when you scratch it and hit it, it can be really liquid. Metal is always here and transforming. Like a fossil, the memory of the earth." And do you feel a connection with the landscape of the Mercantour National Park? "Yes, now I moved back there again. Not where I grew up, but in the village of my great grandma. I think moving there and living in her house I felt the presence of the ancestors, and the geology of the landscape there is really strong. It's quite impossible to not see the past everywhere." ☐ Camille Émaille's *Belisama: The Metal Roots* is released by Takuroku. Her London Cafe Oto residency runs from 27–29 October

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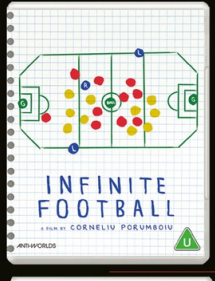

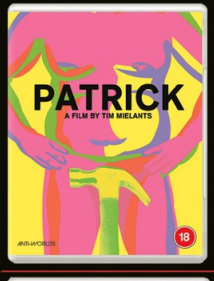

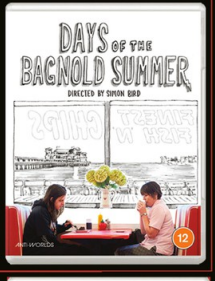

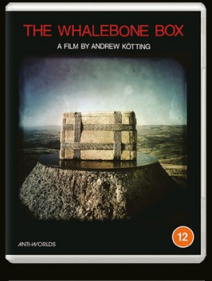

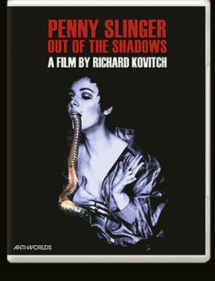

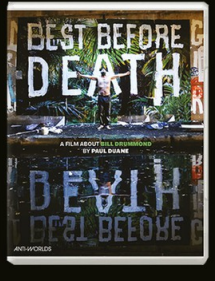

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Global Ear

The remnants of the devastated Japanese coastal town of **Arahama** are brought back to life in the work of recordist Nami Sato. By **Josh Trichilo**

Nami Sato in Arahama

Arahama was a town no bigger than one square kilometre. It sat a stone's throw away from the Pacific coast of northeastern Japan, about a 20 minute drive from the nearest major city Sendai, which is about a two hour ride on the Shinkansen bullet train from Tokyo. The smells and sounds of the sea always snuck through its streets. The ocean vibrations turned monstrous, however, on 11 March 2011, when a 13 metre tsunami careened four kilometres past the shoreline.

Ten years later, those smells and sounds remain. But they now contend with a giant seawall behind which are green open fields, dotted with the once contested housing plots and shacks of groups who wished that Arahama return to its residential status. Those calls went unanswered. A year after the disaster, just as the last debris was cleared, residential building was banned in Arahama – the risk of repeated destruction was the reason given by the authorities. The plots and shacks are now overshadowed by the skeletons of new buildings being made for private companies. And so, for those born there and whose parents and parents' parents were too, Arahama, wounded by its sea, is at risk of being lost to the wind.

The field recordist and musician Nami Sato was born and raised in the town. She listens to that wind, which once gently buffeted her creaky, centuries-old family house, and records it. The electronic music releases she made after the tsunami are all tied to the post-disaster Arahama region, knitted with the threads of what she captured in her recordings. This is especially true of her latest album, 2019's *Our Map Here*. The sea and wind blanket its ambient tracks. The voices of previous residents at formal memorial events and informal gatherings along the coast form rhythmic patterns and narrative embellishments in its more structured songs. Each of the album's tracks sport the name of the area where the initial recording was made.

Sato wants people to know that Arahama continues to exist, without victimising or romanticising it. And she is as quick to quip that composing is a personal process as that her music relates to an "our" which still exists in Arahama. The music speaks *of* the people of Arahama, not *for* them. "The album concept wasn't even my idea," she explains. "It was drawn up with the director of a memorial institution as background music for an exhibition about Arahama today." The institute is the Sendai 3/11 Memorial Community Centre, and its director was an ally in an unforgiving post-disaster political environment. Memorial institutions are increasingly denied funding for events that "aren't about the tsunami". The director had a knack for twisting her applications just so.

As far as the government is concerned, there can be no funding for the future of a people that no longer exists. People of the coastal region had to consider how they would participate in a community which now lacked permanent residences. Sato, encouraged by the exhibition and seeing the everyday connections she and many others still have to the region, made the album as a call for hope, something which has been in short supply. "Those we considered our leaders, my grandfather among them, passed away in the tsunami. There were too few left to drum up and gather dissenting opinions on the re-zoning."

Sato is doing what she can in her grandfather's stead. Her album is not only a testament to the life that goes on in Arahama, it is part of that life, one that is lived in defiance despite supposedly being the object of national support. This subtle duality – defensive declaration with tender celebration – pervades the entire album. Laughter is the album's central motif, if not motive. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan links laughter with a duality: deficit and excess. Recordings of it appear on every track of the album: Sato's quiet laughter with the director, that of an elderly woman up front in the mix, and of groups erupting and dissipating in noisy accents. Each is burdened with meaning, purpose and pathos. The voices, after having breathed in the Arahama air, seem to laugh it out through the speakers. The voices say "we are here" despite the re-zoning, but what that "we" is isn't a given. Each track is a one-off, preventing the sense that these laughs add up to something essential.

The album's aesthetics could have been less ambiguous. It might have been tempting to present a happy, recovered communal picture that might have attracted mainstream media, but Sato is uninterested in representing something that doesn't exist. "I will never be able to approach 'the whole community' of Arahama," she says of her music. "I've never thought, let's unite our hearts through music! In fact, I hate the sentiment."

Recording seems amenable to this double movement of her work. The process is, after all, itself double: it departs from that which it supposedly documents. Somehow, in recording, Sato's personal process and communal gesturing come to a head. She asserts that the most interesting part of recording is the lack of full control. "It's like swimming in the ocean" – a surprising metaphor given the context – "the waves toss you here and there, but you're still swimming."

The metaphor hints at some deeper link in the processes of making the album and healing, as though the crux of both turns on chance. "Recording touches everything that cannot be controlled in this world. I can't control other people, nature, an earthquake, a tsunami, the flow of a river… above all, I can't control myself. Don't fight it. The future only comes from that which you don't fully control."

In not fighting the future, Sato seems to have found a way to fight for it. ☐ satonami.bandcamp.com, theambientzone.bandcamp.com/album/our-map-here

Josh Trichilo

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Invisible Jukebox

Each month we play an artist or group a series of records which they are asked to comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they are about to hear. This month it's the turn of

Big Joanie

Tested by **Leah Kardos**. Photography by **Olivia Ezechukwu**

Black feminist punk trio Big Joanie came together in the early 2010s out of a shared frustration at the lack of intersectionality in the UK's punk scene, and made a name for themselves with a run of well received singles, EPs and live appearances. Legend has it that Thurston Moore and Eva Prinz created their independent label Daydream Library Series primarily to release Big Joanie's debut album *Sistahs*, in 2018.

In the years since, they have toured with the likes of Bikini Kill, Skunk Anansie, Sleater-Kinney, IDLES and St Vincent. In 2020, the group released an interpretation of Solange's "Cranes In The Sky" as a single with Third Man Records, and 2022 saw them play Glastonbury Festival for the first time, and appear as part of Grace Jones's Meltdown event on London's South Bank.

The band have become known for their activism and strong community ties. Lead singer and guitarist Stephanie Phillips was instrumental in establishing the DIY Diaspora Punx collective – a group of POC musicians who organise the annual Decolonise Fest, the UK's first music festival created by and for musicians of colour. Phillips is also a prolific writer, with her first book *Why Solange Matters* published by Faber in 2021.

In addition to being part of the collective behind Decolonise Fest, bass player and vocalist Estella Adeyeri spends time coaching new talent with Hackney based educational charity Girls Rock London. Drummer and backing vocalist Chardine Taylor Stone is a prominent LGBTQI+ activist and educator, and last year was Vice Chair of the Musician's Union Equalities Commission. In 2016 she spearheaded the Stop Rainbow Racism campaign, which works to stop racist and blackface performances in queer venues.

Back Home, Big Joanie's second album, is released this month. The Jukebox took place in Haggerston, East London during a break in the Decolonise Fest schedule.

Sleater-Kinney
"Dig Me Out"
From *Dig Me Out* (Kill Rock Stars) 1997

Chardine Taylor Stone: It's Sleater-Kinney! I'd recognise that guitar sound anywhere.

I take it you guys are big fans?

Stephanie Phillips: Oh yeah. When I was a teenager growing up, and I'm still a big fan now. And aside from being a model of a feminist band, they were also a really big influence in terms of laying out a way to be impactful. Before them I don't think I realised how big an impact having a really good drummer made to a band, or having another singer who sounded different, or being able to adopt a certain stance as a guitarist. Sleater-Kinney was how I realised you can really define your own sound as a band and you can use that to stand out. I still really love their music today. It was really cool to get to support them actually.

What are they like?

Estella Adeyeri: They're really cute. They're really tiny!

CTS: It was really cool to be able to watch them play with a level of intensity. You can see Carrie Brownstein embodying all the guitar heroes that she loves, with her [Gibson] SG and her high kicks. I think in terms of their influence, they're important to me not only because they've come out of a DIY feminist scene, but also because they're just respected as a rock band.

SP: Yeah, that's true.

CTS: I don't know if many other bands from that scene or a lot of similar women bands have actually made that transition into just the 'rock' space, rather than, like, women-led rock. Even when you think of a band like The Runaways. Obviously they're iconic now, but I don't know if many people know how to talk about them without having to qualify them as a 'women's band' sort of thing. I feel like Sleater-Kinney just smashed through that.

Ronettes
"Walking In The Rain'
From *Walking In The Rain* 7" (Philles) 1964

SP: I know this song… I think it's The Ronettes?

CTS: Is it called "I Love Him And I Need Him"? You know how like some 60s songs are just, like, the title is the chorus…

EA: Sounds like it's about the weather…

CTS: … is it "When It Rains", or something?

Steph you're right, it's The Ronettes' "Walking In The Rain"

CTS: Ah, see! We were getting there.

People often mention how Big Joanie have a connection to the music of girl groups from the 1960s. I can hear it in the melodies and group harmonies, but is it also there in the lyrical themes of love and loss?

SP: Yeah, I guess it's the good thing about girl groups. These are like eternal topics that you can always relate to. They write about love, relationships and being young. And people always want to imagine themselves being young and falling in love, so…

CTS: Ronnie Spector, she was a bit punk as well. She was friends with people like Johnny Thunders and The Ramones and shit, you know what I mean?

SP: They were marketed as pop but they were still pretty badass. Their attitude was really quite revolutionary when you think about it.

CTS: When you watch the live performances from that era, it's like all the other girl groups were still doing sweet *"doot doo"* type music. And then you had them and The Shangri-Las… when Ronnie Spector kicks in on the stage, she is like a rock 'n' roller.

Grace Jones
"Nightclubbing"
From *Nightclubbing* (Island) 1981

CTS: I thought the beginning of that was Bauhaus, "Bela Lugosi's Dead".

EA: Oh yeah, it does sound like that. Oh man I know it, but I can't put my finger on who it is. It sounds like it's Grace Jones [singing begins].

There's no mistaking that voice, is there? Did you guys get to meet her at Meltdown?

EA: No, but I wish we could have. It was amazing that we were asked to be a part of it.

This album had that iconic album cover where she has the jacket with the square shoulders and the cigarette. I remember when I was really young just thinking, wow, that is so glamorous.

CTS: Obviously being a model as well, she's very self aware of her image. With her, I feel that people know Grace Jones for her image more than for her music. That's interesting with her, the music isn't as well known as the way she looks.

Maybe you're right about that, if you asked a random person on the street they probably couldn't name many of her hits. This is a cover of an Iggy Pop song, by the way – a kind of seedy sounding post-disco track. But going back to the idea of how artists present themselves, you guys strike me as

Big Joanie in London, September 2022: (from left) Estella Adeyeri, Stephanie Phillips, Chardine Taylor Stone

being quite glam on stage. What do you think about the aesthetic tropes of punk?
EA: You mean how some bands look dirty, but in a curated sort of way?
CTS: Early punk was very self aware, the curated, dirty aesthetic was planned. I mean, that Vivienne Westwood shop [Sex in Chelsea, West London] wasn't cheap. It was like designer clothing. I think the scene now is much more influenced by American styles – like, you've got your [Converse] Chucks and your Vans and a T-shirt. It's very much like that.
SP: And I guess there's a lot of people that try and be punk by looking like they don't care. But if you're getting out of the house, if you're going on stage, you probably do care.
EA: Everyone suddenly has the same mullet haircut… but you don't care.
CTS: The same dirty white T-shirt… but you don't care. It's part of the performance, isn't it? All those people that we look up to, they all have their stage wear. Sleater-Kinney had a whole wardrobe. Kathleen Hanna's got her little dresses. People have all these things, and it's a bit pretentious that performers pretend that they don't care about it. You've got to know what works on stage, and what works for getting into the zone of performing, you know? I don't look like this on a day to day basis. You have to put the character on and then that's part of the performance.

MIA
"Fire Fire"
From *Arular* (XL) 2005
SP: [immediately] MIA! Is this from the first album?
Yep. From *Arular*, 2005.
SP: I remember when MIA first came out she rocketed really quickly. And she sounded so exciting and different. Well, at least to me, in Wolverhampton as a teenager, she sounded really different. Ah, I had forgotten how good this sounds, even now.
You guys would have been kids in the mid-2000s. What other things do you remember listening to growing up?
EA: I remember liking Santigold as well. Probably around a similar time period? And similarly slightly alternative. I also went through a phase of being into emo, and regularly reading the magazine *Metal Hammer*.
SP: I listened to a lot of Yeah Yeah Yeahs. I was really into PJ Harvey for a while. The Distillers, Bloc Party. Actually, except for them and a few emo bands, like My Chemical Romance, I mostly listened to a lot of women. That's around the time I got into Bikini Kill and Sleater-Kinney, Heavens To Betsy and Bratmobile.
EA: I remember finding Sleater-Kinney and Be Your Own Pet in the library CD collections.
CTS: Yeah we stayed at [Be Your Own Pet] Jemina Pearl's house in Nashville a while ago. We got to have a look around the Third Man studios and all that sort of stuff. But yeah, in 2005 I was working in Camden [in North London] and living in a squat. It was quite an interesting time, I was very much part of the punk scene. So like, the bridge punks, and then there were little offshoots like the psychobillies, and the skinheads… and we used to go to a night called Not Another Shit Indie Night, which is quite funny, because it was a reaction to the whole indie blow-up at the time. I remember they'd play bands like Kid

MIA

Dynamite, Strike Anywhere and AFI… It was a sort of a punk night basically, like, all 2000s-era British punk.
EA: The Filaments, King Prawn…
CTS: I think it's kind of been forgotten about now. A lot of the music press focus at the time was the East London, The Old Blue Last sort of scene, but at the time we thought those people were coked-up wankers. And they would come into the shop where I worked. That was basically what I was doing, and butterfly tops for these twats. When you're younger, you kind of have your tribe, don't you.
SP: I was at home in Wolverhampton, learning about all of this stuff from reading about it in *NME*.
MIA's politics have been interesting, lately she's gotten into some spicy conspiracy theory stuff.
CTS: She's gone a bit hotep, bless her.
SP: It's a bit of a shame, because technically some of the things that she first was talking about were definitely real. I remember there was like a documentary on her that explained some of it.
CTS: Her parents are Tamil, weren't they? It was always very political…
SP: She's been very political about that, and right about the kind of things that are happening there. And then she was saying that someone from the government was watching her and it turned out she was right, because they were.
So it's like she has a right to be paranoid?
SP: There was something going on there and she wasn't wrong … when you're right about the CIA watching you, then you're going to think you're right about Covid or whatever.
CTS: Recently the FBI released records about how they watched Aretha Franklin, and her activism and stuff. Who knows who's watching what any of us is doing? I can understand how that would then lead to paranoia.
SP: She's an amazing artist, but yeah, she might have gone off the deep end.
CTS: It's such a shame. I think fame does that to people, too.
It's easy to become isolated, do you think?
CTS: We're a small to medium band. But we've peeked into the world of bigger stars and people and stuff. And you notice it does change people, you can see this world that people exist in. It's very weird. I won't say which tour it was that we were on. But very recently, and it was very LA Hollywood vibes and it was just very weird. I can see it would be quite hard to stay grounded. How can you do that with people kissing your arse every day?

X-Ray Spex
"I Am A Poseur"
From *Germfree Adolescents* (EMI) 1978
CTS: [Over the intro] Oh that's Poly Styrene. X-Ray Spex, "I Am A Poseur"… we were just talking about this, the punk fashion thing.
SP: She was right about this, and one of the only ones that was quite honest about it. It might have been in that recent [Poly Styrene] documentary *I Am A Cliché*, there's an interview where she says something like, 'I'm mixed race. I've got a Jheri curl. And I've got braces. I can't just like walk in like that.' So she had to stylise the way she looked, and use those military hats and vintage wear so that she could appear authoritative on stage. And so the band would listen to her as well.
CTS: You're in it, aren't you Steph?
SP: I was interviewed for the documentary and for the book it was based on. And yeah, I was really tearful watching the documentary. Because everyone loves Poly Styrene and accepted the journey she went on. But then I don't think anyone knew the reality of what it meant to be who she was, and how it impacted her life and her daughter's life. Just seeing how distressing it was for her family, it was a lot to take in. Sometimes you need to reconsider what it means to be a fan of someone, asking yourself if you are supporting them in the right way. It's an amazing documentary.
CTS: Recently I saw some old pictures of Courtney Love [of Hole], on one of these Girls Of The 90s archive Instagram accounts. And there was a photo there where she looks really fucked. Obviously, these people had a lot of drug problems, you know? The aesthetic with punk and rock 'n' roll can be really unhealthy. I was looking at it, and you can see she wasn't in a good place. And then the fashion of it, people trying to look like they've got a habit…
SP: It's uncomfortable.
EA: I don't think people realise how dark it is.
CTS: No one wants to lose friends. It's actually really horrible. There's this idea that to be deep and creative you've got to be a fucked up person. Maybe we've gotten better on those conversations now, but still, a lot of people are struggling…
EA: There's things like Music Support [musicsupport.org], a charity that supports musicians struggling with addiction, and how it impacts different scenes and stuff. They had a DJ talking about this sort of thing recently. She was talking about how difficult it was for her being a DJ and how you're expected to socialise, you do drugs with people late at night, networking, or if you need to stay up, like all hours of the night. It's just the done thing.
CTS: There's a lot of enabling in the music world. Sometimes we've turned up for gigs, and we have our rider set out. We might have a few drinks on there, but we need food to eat too, you know. And sometimes you get there and there's just a million cans of Red Stripe, and you're wondering if it's just expected for

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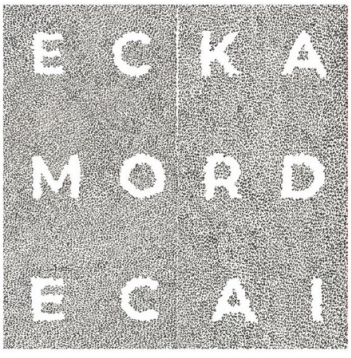

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us to drink tonnes of booze for every show? Because once you've done that every day for two weeks, it's not sustainable. I think we need to have a bit more of a culture of bands asking themselves, 'Do I need 20 cans of fucking Red Stripe just to play?'

I think where you have music that's often cathartic and emotional and extreme, the behaviour of people who engage in those cultures might also be extreme sometimes. Do you think people are becoming more open to discussing health issues in the scene?

EA: I still see those tropes enacted sometimes. And if you're thinking beyond the DIY scene, sometimes we're looking at the touring schedules of bands, maybe not that much bigger than us, and it doesn't look sustainable. It's like, who's looking after that artist? If that artist is on the road for three months, how are they going to feel at the end of it? Why are we seeing so many artists come forward and say they've had to cancel their tours because like, their mental health is so bad? And who has allowed it to get that bad?

CTS: The band Surfbort talk about that a lot. The lead singer is sober now, and on the stage she's very all over the place, very loud and stuff. And I think it shows that you can do that without all the enabling. In a way, it's almost cooler. I've never been wasted on stage. I wouldn't be able to play properly. And I think also, for us as women, it's harder to get away with that messy show.

Men can get away with some sloppy behaviour on stage, but when it comes to music, women are often held to a higher standard. And if female musicians are a bit sloppy, not quite together, their musicianship can get called into question, or they're not 'real' musicians.

CTS: And the sloppiness can become like a sort of spectacle. For instance any show by Courtney Love where she's a bit out of it, it becomes a spectacle and all about that. She's not seen as a musician, a guitarist, a songwriter, it's become about her being this character, when actually she's a brilliant songwriter.

I went back to listen to those Hole records again recently, and thought the material really stands up. The conversation around them, and Courtney specifically, was so mean back then.

SP: They were just jealous. It had to be jealousy, they were such well-written songs.

Skunk Anansie
"Charity"

From *Paranoid & Sunburnt* (One Little Independent) 1995

CTS: [Opening guitars] this sounds like Deftones a bit… it's got that *air guitar*. [Singing starts] OK, I got the era. Skunk Anansie. It's the voice, unmistakably.

SP: Yeah, you couldn't mistake her. And still sounds amazing. That performance at Glastonbury this year…

EA: Oh my God, that was amazing.

CTS: She [Skin] is still so underrated. Queer, black, political. They were always political. They stood apart from what was popular in the music industry. I still feel like even though she's such an iconic name and face in the music world, there's still a lack of recognition for her within the Black community for the music that she makes.

Have you met her? What's she like?

CTS: She's really cool and inspiring. And she's still pushing the boundaries of the industry as well.

Crystal Axis
"Nyayo House"

From *Nyayo House* (No label) 2019

EA: Emo vibes…

CTS: That is so naughties emo.

It's Kenyan group Crystal Axis.

EA: Oh really? That's interesting!

From 2019. "Nyayo House". They've performed at Decolonise Fest before.

EA: They took part online I think, yeah. That sounds so emo, even the lyrics. Actually it's true, there seems to be, especially in the POC up-and-coming punk and alternative scene as well, there's a big throwback to that particular sound. You can hear it with bands like Pinkshift. But they're a lot younger than us, they weren't there the first time around, and it's interesting to see from the next generation what bits have filtered through.

Which exciting POC rock bands should people be listening to?

EA: I really like Taqbir. They're a female hardcore band, still quite young, really heavy…

CTS: Whitelands as well, a great shoegaze band.

SP: All the Decolonised bands!

Solange
"Almeda"

From *When I Get Home* (Columbia) 2019

SP: Solange. "Almeda" [laughs]. Yeah, she's my [BBC quiz show] *Mastermind* topic.

You've written a book about *Why Solange Matters*, and Big Joanie have covered her song "Cranes In The Sky". So Solange matters to Big Joanie too?

SP: When we decided to do the cover of "Cranes", I can't remember who suggested it initially, but it was something that we all wanted to do. We'd been listening to the album so much at the time. It just made sense to do. I think she's a very cool artist, obviously. She's an artist that has meant a lot to a lot of Black women, the way she's gone about carving out a space for herself.

When I think about Solange I think about the Black Lives Matter movement too, something you guys have been involved with in the UK.

CTS: We've been involved from the very beginning.

Pink Siifu

People think it started with the big marches that happened a couple of years ago during the pandemic, but, you know, we've been marching since 2014 with BLM UK. There was this whole generation, coming from, like, 2012, when Trayvon Martin was killed, that viral moment kind of kickstarted it, but it's been ten years now. It's a decade-long movement. And we're just seeing the impact of it reaching the mainstream. It just goes to show how much hard work this has been.

"Cranes In the Sky" is a modern Black feminist anthem. It encapsulates so much about Black women's experience. It's a modern perspective that's not afraid to talk about depression, things like that. Whereas in previous generations, the story for us was about being self-empowered and strong. But she knows that many of us are just simply trying to get through. That feels like a change. Radical vulnerability.

That's a healthy change of perspective, right? Because you can't wear a suit of armour all the time…

CTS: And you know, bell hooks talked about that 20 years ago, in one of my favourite books of hers, *Sisters Of The Yam*. She makes the comment about how some of the most amazing, talented and brilliant women she's ever met, their houses are often in an absolute state because they can't cope with doing all of that work.

Pink Siifu & Tha NEGRO Alive
"At Queen Elizabeth Hall 2022"

YouTube

EA: Hmm. OK, this is quite jazzy.

It's a hiphop artist called Pink Siifu.

CTS: I don't know who that is….

This recording is from a gig at London Southbank Centre earlier this year, and he has a hardcore fusion project called Tha NEGRO Alive. I wanted to ask you about how underground POC music scenes and styles can mingle in interesting ways sometimes. Like here, with punk, hiphop and jazz.

CTS: It's good to recognise that many of these genres are connected musically, and that we have a place in all of them. But I think it's always been like that. I mean, I'm thinking about Parliament-Funkadelic, where it was funk, but they were also like a psych rock band. And there's bands like THEESatisfaction as well, that walk a similar line. Bartees Strange is another one.

SP: There's quite a few when you think about it.

CTS: Thundercat?

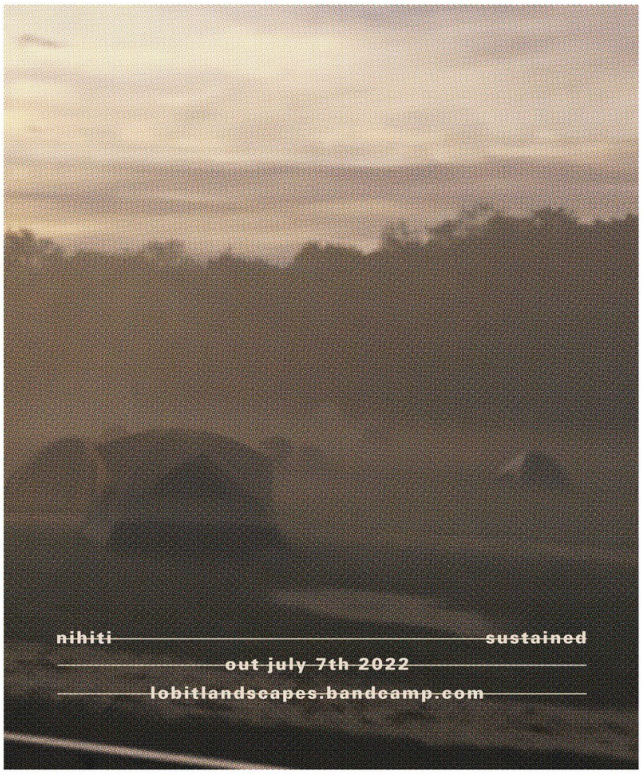
Who used to play with Suicidal Tendencies. Then he's collaborating with Kendrick Lamar. Then that AOR-style stuff with Michael McDonald. There's no rules, right?

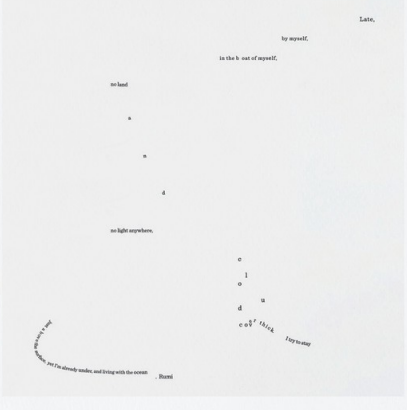
EA: Blood Orange [Dev Hynes], he's another one. From Test Icicles…

CTS: I mean, who was it that decided something was Black music and something was white music? The record companies did. The capitalist ethos of, we're gonna sell these white records to these white people, we're gonna sell these Black records to these people. But if you actually look at who's making the music, or who's producing it, you know, Def Jam Records and Rick Rubin, a big white Jewish guy, but he's so, like, iconic to hiphop. So how can you then say that certain types of music are only for for certain types of people?

SP: Yeah, it's weird. Genre boundaries can be totally pointless. ☐

Ari Marcopoulos





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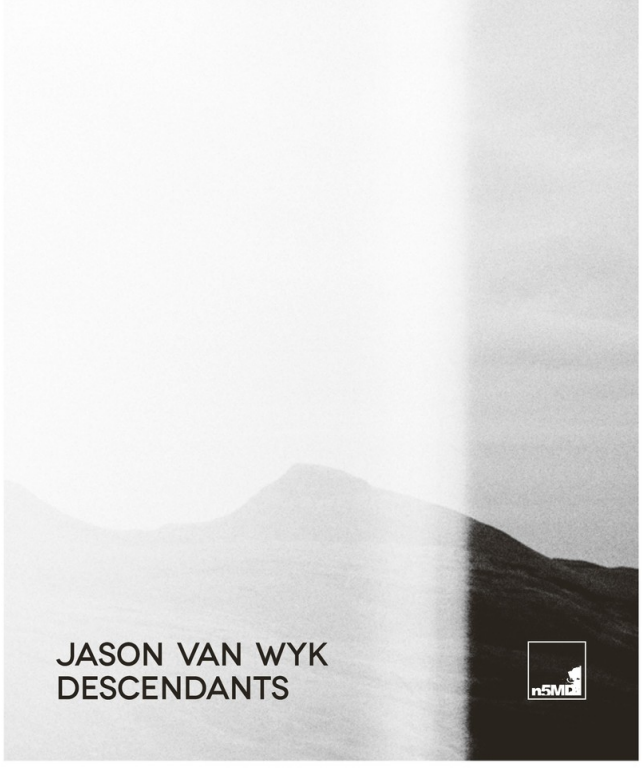


Devin Townsend in Vancouver, September 2022

Eye Of The Storm

Canadian musician and producer
Devin Townsend
is one of contemporary rock's few genuine studio auteurs, drawing on collage and improvisation to develop his own unique form of sonic therapy.
By **Joseph Stannard**. Photography by **Alana Paterson**

Devin Townsend is widely associated with metal due to his leadership of the hysterical meta-metal outfit Strapping Young Lad, who riffed and gurned their way across the world from 1994–2007. The band released five studio albums, including 1997's incredible *City*, which remains the apotheosis of cyber-metal thanks to its detailed production and machine-tooled brutality. Even during Strapping's existence however he was busy forging a solo career that would make him gradually harder to categorise, incorporating electronics, ambient drift, noise, sonic collage and improvisation. In 2022 he cuts a figure somewhat comparable to Frank Zappa and Todd Rundgren in the 1970s, Kate Bush in the 80s or Björk now: restlessly creative, unbound by genre, given to flights of multimedia fancy.

Experimental musician and producer Will Ballantyne, who records as City and Anti-God Hand, is a longtime admirer. "One of the things I love the most about Devin's music," says Ballantyne, "is when he swings towards beautiful, openhearted optimism. It's so rare in metal to get the other side of the anxiety, depression and nihilism. But in real life everyone has their moments of darkness and their moments of bright light. Devin's music has always captured both of those so beautifully and honestly… as an artist, his music is inspiring for its sheer quality. As a person, he's inspiring for sharing his experiences and struggles with mental health and substance abuse. He seems like someone who could've tapped out a thousand times before but stuck around to share his message that things get better."

Townsend's latest project is *Lightwork*, an album touted by label InsideOut as one of his "most accessible, yet ambitious" to date. Whether it's as ambitious as 2019's astonishing *Empath* or 2021's *The Puzzle* depends on one's perspective. But there's no doubt Townsend's decision to work with an outside producer – Garth 'GGGarth' Richardson, known for his work with Melvins, Rage Against The Machine and Gallows, among others – pushed the musician out of his comfort zone.

"Yeah, it was a violent epiphany to be honest," Townsend tells me via Zoom. "Because I think hand in hand with relinquishing control is accepting the parts of you that are integral to what allows the work to remain authentic. Throughout my career, whether or not it was this situation or others, a lot of times when I'm unwilling to go to certain places, commercially, personally, theatrically, the reaction is, well, maybe you're afraid of success. And my answer to that is, I'm afraid of a certain type of success, I'm afraid of success in the realm of something that is not true to my nature."

Did the process ultimately entail Richardson taking on an editorial role? "Yes, very much, very much," he nods. "And, you know, he's a brilliant guy and a good friend. But it wasn't easy for him either. So I think that what you end up with is an interesting collision. Because he had a vision for the way that he thought the album should be. And I had a vision for the way that the album should be. By the end of it, I had to go with my gut. And that's what I did." He admits there was a point at which he feared *Lightwork* was slipping too far in a commercial direction, which compelled him to take evasive action. "I rearranged and restructured certain things at the last minute," he says.

Lightwork may be "accessible" – first single "Moonpeople" is his finest pop song to date – but it doesn't upset the continuity of Townsend's career any more than *Empath*. This is illustrated by "Heartbreaker" and "Dimensions" at the centre of the album. The former's electronics billow like cumulonimbi across a thunderous rhythm that slips in and out of waltz time; the latter begins as snowpiercing motorik rock and ends as softcore death metal. "Celestial Signals" and the winsome "Heavy Burden" betray Townsend's affection for the glacial symphonics purveyed by Enya – he has cited the Irish vocalist and composer's 1988 album *Watermark* as foundational – but, as always, he uproots the sounds he likes and replants them in unfamiliar environments, or splices their DNA in order to create exotic hybrids; the latter song in particular moves through a dazzling succession of avenues, pathways and chambers on its way towards oceanic bliss.

The new album has more in common with Lucrecia Dalt's *iAy!* and Björk's *Fossora* than anything in rock or metal. It's song based but teeming with ticklish detail and delightful texture. Some of the sonic oddments require multiple listens to fully grasp – the eerie dropout that occurs two minutes into "Moonpeople" for example, broken by a curt, spoken *"Stop it"* – but the melodies are so rich and generous that the journey to that point is never less

than pleasurable. As with Dalt and Guðmundsdóttir's recent work, there's a big heart beating at the core of these songs, both direct and complex, with a questing lyricism in which our protagonist seems caught in a constant process of examining his position in – and sometimes against – the universe. The lighthouse motif that accompanies the record is the latest in a long line of nautical images scattered throughout his work. What does it all mean?

"I saw something last night from one of those after school specials, those animated ones, I really think they're great. It was Alan Watts or somebody and essentially he said, people think they're the drop, the ripple in the ocean. But the ocean is actually what we are, you know? We're not that drop, we're the ocean. And there's something about the relinquishing of that grasp that is incredibly difficult for me, but also really calming. It's like in order to connect with all that, it requires letting go of all that other stuff. And I guess for me the ocean has always been a metaphor for that."

Prior to our conversation, I find myself flicking through the booklet for Townsend's 2003 album *Accelerated Evolution* where I come across the lyric *"Into the unknown/Seeking the unknown/Into the unknown"* ("Depth Charge"). The unknown also makes an appearance on *Lightwork* in the refrain *"Ode/Off to the unknown"* ("Moonpeople"). But where the meaning of the ocean has remained constant throughout Townsend's career, his concept of the unknown has shifted.

"I think the unknown is a representation of facing fear," he explains. "I think now as a 50 year old man, how ironic it is that I ended up with this as my career. Because the older I get, the more insular I become, the less I'm comfortable being visible. Left to my own devices, I think I might have just sat on the couch and ate potato chips. And the career that the 18 year old version of me has chosen for me, which is this, has forced me to contend with parts of my nature that I don't know if I ever would have. I think that the unknown in "Moonpeople" is maybe a little different, because *Accelerated Evolution*, in that particular period, I think I was more fascinated, as you tend to be in your twenties, with my own bullshit. Like, you smoke a bunch of dope and you think that your thoughts are really clever, whatever. I was like, wow, it's so fascinating! The story of me is just so enthralling!"

You're a bold voyager!

"That's what it is!" he laughs. "And as a 50 year old with kids and everything you realise, well, I learned what I needed to know about myself and I'm comfortable with who I am now. And the unknown now is much more… how do you find ways to contend with the parts of your process or your nature that have consistently caused you suffering by your own hand? I recognise these patterns, whether it was confrontation, or fear of failure, fear of success, fear of all these things. And it's almost like life just keeps providing you the same circumstances until you say, OK, well listen, this is *clearly* a pattern. And the way to contend with that pattern, oftentimes, is to let go of the things that you've been doing in the hope that what is behind that is where your answers are gonna lie.

"So I think that the unknown in this sense is more referring to that," he continues. "It's like, listen, my hands are up, I can't control anything, clearly. So what I'm going to try and do is get myself together physically, psychologically, keep an eye on the things in life that are important to me, and try to let go of this chaos of social media and everything. That's the type of unknown that I think I'm referring to with "Moonpeople". It's almost like a mission statement straight off the top of the record."

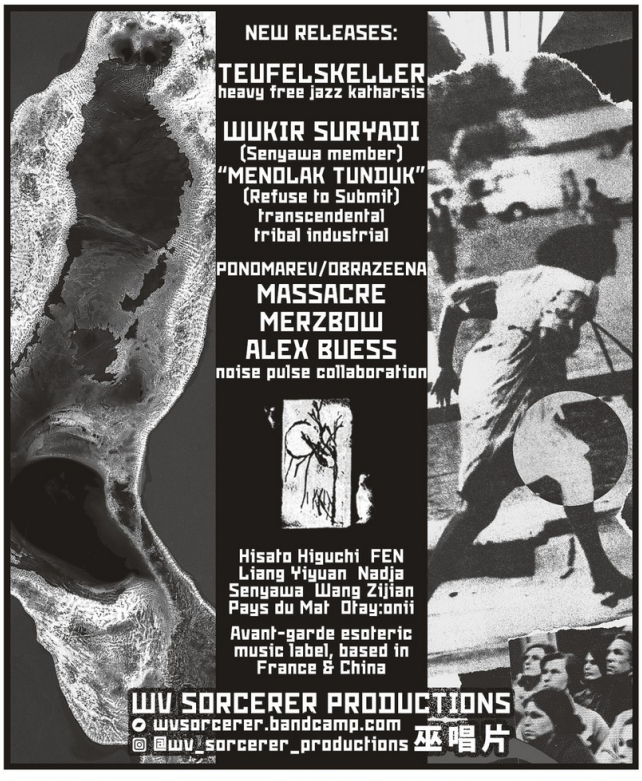
For Townsend, the visual component of a release develops in tandem with the music. The themes of *Lightwork* for example are reflected in its bright and bold artwork depicting a lighthouse assailed from all sides by tentacles from the deep.

"I'm very fortunate to work with some great artists, but specifically Travis Smith," says Townsend. "Not only is he a great visual artist, he's a good friend. So when I start a record, we speak similar languages. I'll be like, it's something to do with a lighthouse, it's something to do with aquamarine, it's got a nautical theme, it's whimsical in a way that looks like a Wes Anderson film, the font itself is really bold, an octopus for some reason is a big thing. So I'll send him all these images. And he starts sending me things back, usually with a logo." Townsend then takes these rough designs and puts them up as a screensaver. "So as I'm working, I'm like, does that match? Does this take this hand in hand? Sometimes it's more immediately apparent. During this period though, because of the pandemic and everything, a lot of what made the aesthetics for *Lightwork* so important to me was that I wanted to consciously create an atmosphere for the listener – amidst a sea of chaos, the light is a representation of the creative impulse, whether that's music, or birth. That sense of the compulsion of the creative energies was something that I could focus on."

Townsend's rapport with Smith and other visual artists seems especially significant given that he is a synaesthete ("A is red, C is blue, G is green, D is dark blue, B is orange, F is a type of green. C is a circle, A is a triangle. G is a triangle," he tells me). His music often seems to trigger my own auditory-tactile synaesthesia. I mention, somewhat bashfully, that "Where We Belong" from 2012's *Epicloud* imparts the sensation of being engulfed in cold blue fire. "You see," replies Townsend. "We're speaking the same language."

Towards the close of 2021, Townsend released two albums, *The Puzzle* and *Snuggles*, via his own HevyDevy imprint. The former, a sonic collage covering a bewildering range of musical styles and assembled with the aid of a huge cast of remote contributors, was his attempt to document the fear, isolation and uncertainty of the pandemic. The latter was its soothing counterpart, a straightforwardly lovely ambient record designed to comfort the listener after the intensity of its companion. Townsend had released ambient and noise works before, such as 2004's *Devlab*, 2006's *The Hummer* and the excoriating 12 minute "Info Dump" which closes Strapping Young Lad's 2005 album *Alien*. These passed with relatively little comment, positive or negative. Townsend believes this is due to their being perceived as "additional content" – side-projects rather than significant additions to the discography. Given the joy and gratitude which greets my mention of *The Puzzle*, it's evident

"It's like, hands up, I can't control anything, clearly. So what I am going to try and do is keep an eye on the things in life that are important to me"



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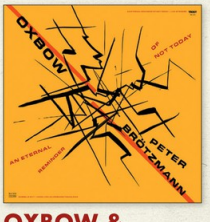

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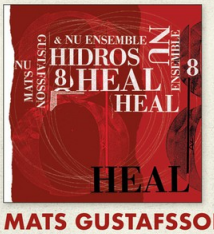

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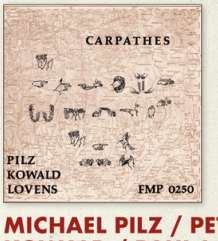

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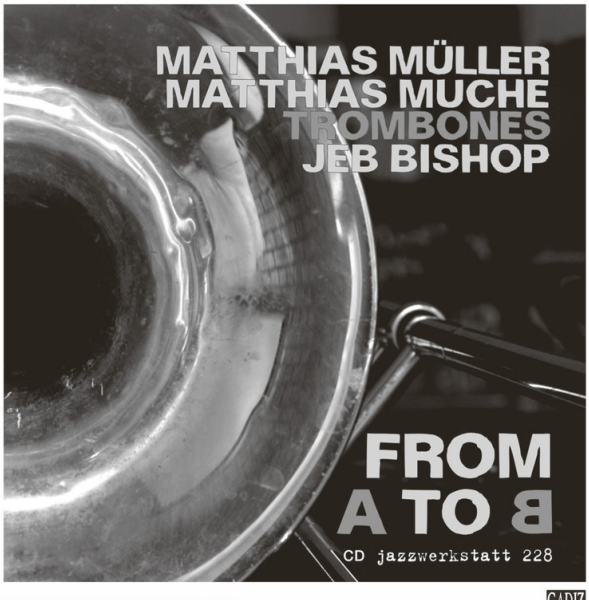

CELEBRATE THE TROMBONE

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Supported by Initiative Musik gGmbH with project funds from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media

that Townsend considers the album more than a dilettantish sideshow to his rock orientated material. He nevertheless describes the response it received as "80 per cent negative".

"When *The Puzzle* came out, a lot of the response was less vitriolic than confused," he says. "People were like 'There are no songs here'. I remember, it's funny, people reviewing it were like, 'Well, this track here…' and I'm like, it's not a track! It's like an ID point. So if you wanted to get to that point, that ID will put you there in the trajectory. It's not like a 12 second song," he laughs. "But the session to mix *The Puzzle* was fucking insane, man. Like, bolts were flying off my computer by the end of it. It's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of tracks, right? And they all had to be colour coordinated to whoever was involved with it."

Lightwork was already in production when Townsend initiated *The Puzzle*. In fact in some respects it was his instinctive response to the collaborative process he had entered into with his co-producer. "My reaction to GGGarth saying, 'This is too long, this doesn't make sense', was *The Puzzle*. What I ended up doing was in reaction to being told what to do – I'm going to get 60 people, and I'm gonna not tell *any of them* what to do. And then when they deliver it, I'm gonna make it work."

By Townsend's own admission, *The Puzzle* became a mammoth undertaking. He composed and recorded a basic track (audible in the box set version of the record) and invited selected friends and collaborators (including former Frank Zappa guitarists Steve Vai and Mike Keneally) from a diverse set of backgrounds and disciplines to contribute. "So 60 people would send me shit every day, 60 downloads, and some people would send me like 15 tracks of shit, drums and keyboards and whatever. They're like, this starts at bar 141, this starts at bar 392. And what I would do, most of my day was dropping it in – colour coordinate it, drop it in, colour coordinate it, drop it in. Like, Tina's yellow, Morgan's beige, Jonas is purple, you know. And then I've got this thing that completely doesn't work. As soon as you play it, it's not just chaos – one person would interpret part of it in a major key, other people would interpret in a minor key. It just didn't work."

Townsend was nonetheless determined to remain within the parameters he had set for the project. "Part of the concept for me was that I didn't want to change it… whatever you give me, I'm going to make work. And not only am I going to make it work, I'm going to use it all. So I would then take the [original] structure, and if there was one section that ten people had submitted parts to, what I would do is I would rearrange that, then I would take sections, double this, use certain aspects of it there. There are certain parts, like in "Monuments Of Glitch", where every bar is a different person. But that also wouldn't work. So what I would have to do is take the instrumentation that I was responsible for and augment it, so those random pieces had some sort of linear musical sense. So it's not just abstract."

Townsend's series of lockdown podcasts – during which he revisited and recontextualised past work – demonstrated that, for him, each release constitutes a learning curve with consequences for subsequent projects. *The Puzzle* is no different. "You finish the puzzle, you put the pieces together, and by putting the pieces together, you recognise that not only do you have no control, but you can react to things, and then by reacting to things, you can still achieve your objectives, right? But it was just so psychologically intense to try and piece that together. It was telling too, because there'd be people who would submit a whole thing –there's one musician who wrote basically a whole suite based on it.

"When I sent *The Puzzle* to the people that had contributed, some were bummed out. 'Oh, I had made all this great content in that section!' And I was like, well, so did *they*! And they're my friend too!"

Townsend speaks about *The Puzzle* with a great deal of affection and pride. What's also noteworthy is the degree to which the project was informed by fellowship and love. As an attempt to reflect the diversity of human responses to the pandemic, it already goes further than the average bedroom lockdown project. Meanwhile the aesthetic and organisational challenges it presented could not be disentangled from the personal connections that gave it life.

"There's some people that played on *The Puzzle* that don't know how to play," he says. "There's a friend on it that can't play guitar. But that's what they contributed. They're like, 'I just did this'. And it's out of tune, it's all fucked up. But that's what they heard there. And they're my friend. And they're a part of *The Puzzle*. So this person who had written the suite is going to have to be omitted there. Because the person that added the guitar is as important to me in a lot of ways, and that's what they contributed.

"Part of *The Puzzle* for me was also being able to make those hard decisions, and say, I love you very much. But I also love *them*. Right?" He smiles, shrugs. "What are you gonna do?" ☐ Devin Townsend's *Lightwork* is released by InsideOut Music

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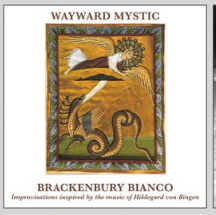

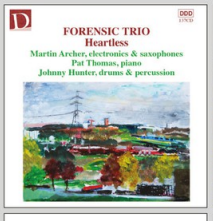

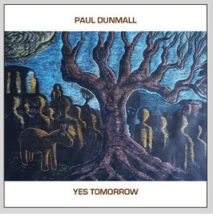

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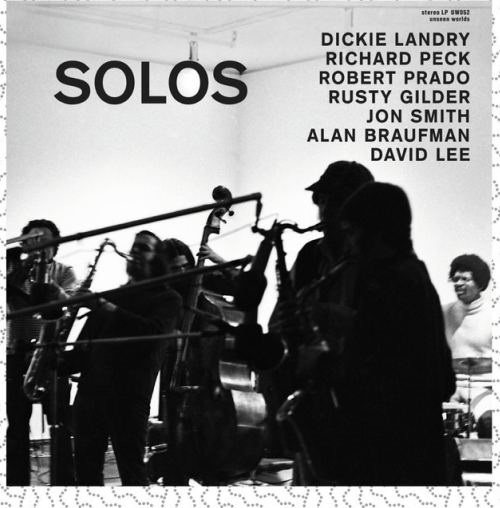

DICKIE LANDRY
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Natural Mystic

Throughout her life, veteran Brazilian singer-songwriter **Joyce** fought against blacklists and being sidelined from her own projects to represent her true self in her songs. She talks to **Joshua Minsoo Kim** about her lost 1977 album *Natureza*.

Joyce (left) and Mauricio Maestro recording *Natureza*, New York, 1977

Raymond Ross

1968 rehearsal: (from left) Milton Nascimento, Zé Roberto Bertrami, Joyce, unknown bassist, Francis Hime, Marcos Valle

Courtesy Joyce

"I have *very* fond memories of carnival balls in the street," says Joyce Moreno. She and I are talking over Zoom when she begins reminiscing about her earliest musical memories. "We had the so-called matinees, which were in the afternoon and only for children. There was a small band playing carnival sambas and it was a closed space, so the parents would be outside watching us as we'd dance and sing. It was very, very fun."

One of the most revered musicians in all of Brazilian music, especially among many of her fellow players, Joyce's long career spans scores of albums both as a featured artist and as a collaborator. But it hasn't been a smooth road, with just a handful of her recordings emerging in the 1970s, a decade when many of her peers like Milton Nascimento and Caetano Veloso were releasing regularly. Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1948, she was always surrounded by music growing up. At family parties she'd sing sambas with one of her brothers accompanying her on guitar. They'd perform songs from artists like Noel Rosa, the prolific and innovative composer whose incisive works about everyday Brazilian life remain well-known today. Otherwise there were record collections, the radio and her close family to fill her home with a variety of sounds.

Joyce was raised by a single mother, and is quick to acknowledge how important she was beyond her contagious appreciation for music. "I saw her independence," she remembers. "Most of my school friends, their mothers didn't work and they depended on the father for everything." In the 1950s, Brazilian women often had limited financial freedom; if they wanted to finance something, they would need permission from their husband. "My mother was able to support her family with dignity, based upon *her work* only," Joyce explains. "That was a very important value for me to see – a brave woman supporting me and my brothers in a very honest way."

There were other reasons having a single mother proved formative. "I could date boys, though only during the day," she laughs, acknowledging that such trysts had to stay hidden. Joyce attended a girls-only nuns' school in Ipanema, and her friends were forbidden by their fathers from going to parties or dancing with boys; she, on the other hand, wasn't. More consequential still was how worldly her mother was. Joyce's mother was engaged at 14, so her own parents took her out of school. But she really craved a rich cultural education. She avoided buying fancy clothes and other luxuries to ensure her children could have what she couldn't: "She'd find free concerts, free ballets, take me to the theatre and buy books." Most illuminating was a trip to Europe at 15. "I remember everything," Joyce says. "We went to France and Spain, to Switzerland and Italy – we visited all the museums."

It was only natural that she'd start playing music. She picked up the guitar at 14 and learned by observing her brother Newton play. 13 years her senior, he was friends with numerous musicians who'd visit their home, including Eumir Deodato, Leny Andrade and Luiz Carlos Vinhas. Given this deep well of musical knowledge to draw from, she learnt about bossa nova and specific vocal harmonies from being around musicians. Most impactful was Roberto Menescal, who invited her to a recording studio when she was 16 to sing with the vocal group Sambacana. She'd create jingles too, but she didn't think a full-time career in music was likely, and so went to journalism school while writing songs in her own time.

Her musical breakthrough came aged 19 with "Me Disseram". The song was a finalist at the Second Festival Internacional da Canção, but proved controversial. "A lot of newspapers were saying that it was immoral and vulgar," recalls Joyce. "It was all men, of course. Since the very beginning, all the songs I wrote were written in the first person of the feminine, which had never been done before in Brazilian music. That was very shocking for those guys."

Translating as "They Told Me", "Me Disseram" is a dreamy marvel: over cascading string arrangements and softly strummed guitar, Joyce sings of a man who people say doesn't love her anymore. She knows better, though, and confidently explains that he longs for her affection. *"I know deep down that he is a child/ It is on me he rests"*, goes one lyric.

Even though she'd been dating at this point, she says she wasn't really drawing from personal experiences. She was employing "eu lírico" – "lyrical I" – and taking the perspective of an older woman, inspired by songs she loved by Billie Holiday and Édith Piaf. Either way, "Me Disseram" was strong enough

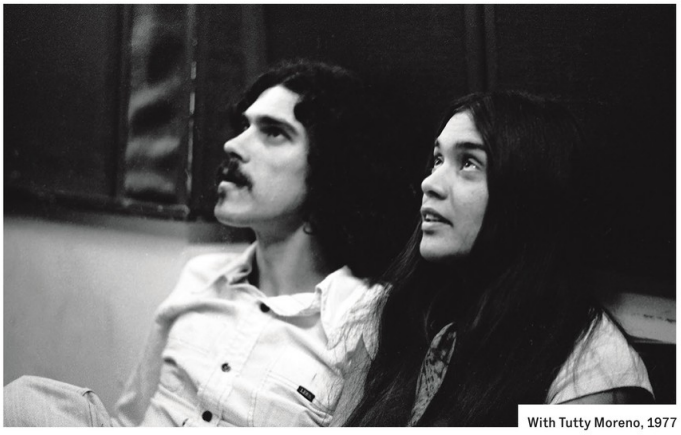
to get her a record deal, and one can hear it close out her 1968 self-titled debut. "Things went on very naturally for me," she admits.

Given the apparent smoothness of her music progression, I bring up *Rio, Zona Norte*, a classic 1957 film by Nelson Pereira dos Santos. Following a poor samba musician's journey to find success, it uses the songform as a way to illuminate pervading inequities in Brazil. We bond over its most stirring scene, when the protagonist Espírito da Luz meets with Angela Maria, an actress who was also the most popular singer in 1950s Brazil. She suddenly starts singing mid-scene, and there's an immense communal joy felt in this moment that is communicated through song alone.

Perhaps inspired by this digression, Joyces tell me about the trials in her own career. "I've been in the music business for 54 years now," she starts. "And the most important thing for me is that I never, *ever* in my life gave up or made concessions to money or fame." She went through many struggles to uphold that ideal, she continues, but she had to "never give into soul corruption". I ask her what challenges she's had and she laughs heartily. "There have been many, many situations – *infinite*."

The goal for her debut LP was to have an album full of original songs, but her label Philips didn't trust her. She wasn't allowed to play guitar, and half the album would have to be songs written by men. So she looked to friends like Marcos Valle, Paulinho da Viola, Toninho Horta and Caetano Veloso for help.

Her second album, 1969's *Encontro Marcado*, was an even more upsetting experience. Philips wanted her to take on a sexier image, so she quit afterwards and took some time for herself. She got married to Nelson Angelo, with whom she had two children, and took part in their 1972 album *Nelson Angelo E Joyce*. She devoted her life to raising her daughters, so these recordings are her only musical output from the early 1970s. Unexpectedly, Joyce reveals that she doesn't consider the album one of her own. "I had no part whatsoever in the making of this," she explains. She initially encouraged her then-husband to record an LP, but EMI wanted them to do one together. After the experiences she had with her own early albums, it's no surprise that a record only featuring one Joyce songwriting credit (the supple and resplendent "Meus Vinte Anos") would be of little interest to her today.



With Tutty Moreno, 1977

She's much more excited to talk about *Passarinho Urbano*, the first true masterpiece of her career. In 1975 she left Angelo and raised her two girls on her own. Her first gig after her hiatus was working with the Brazilian poet Vinicius de Moraes, largely known for writing the lyrics to "The Girl from Ipanema", among many other songs. Around this time he was doing a tour called O Poeta, A Moça E O Violão (The Poet, The Girl And The Guitar), and he was the poet, Toquinho provided the guitar, and various female singers took on the remaining role. There were shows in Uruguay and Argentina that Toquinho couldn't attend, so Joyce filled the slot of singing and playing guitar. Later, all three went on to tour Europe (now with two guitars), and in Italy songwriter and record producer Sergio Bardotti invited her to make an album. "I wasn't prepared at all," she recalls, "but I had this huge repertoire of music I knew forever."

Brazil's military dictatorship was heavily censoring many of her friends' works at the time, so Joyce's various loved ones were on her mind during the making of *Passarinho Urbano*. Songs written by artists like Sidney Miller and Moraes appear on the record. In particular, the latter's "Marcha De IV Feira De Cinzas" is one of the album's most arresting performances. When singing songs she didn't write herself, Joyce declares that she always tries to make them her own by "searching for hidden meanings". Compared to Nara Leão's version, Joyce's stripped down rendition provides a more intimate space to reckon with its lyrics, which discuss the necessity of singing to instill hope in an otherwise gloomy city. The slow bossa nova rhythm provides just enough rhythmic propulsion to carry its soft-spoken sentiment. That the song mentions all this as happening in the aftermath of a carnival is apt, as Joyce stitches *Passarinho Urbano*'s songs with carnival sambas from her childhood. These vignettes bridge the past with the present, both for Brazil as a whole and Joyce herself.

With Mauro Senise, 1980

Shortly after *Passarinho Urbano*, though, there was an unreleased record that would've stood as Joyce's second masterwork. The album originated from Joyce's months-long stint at Cachaça, an upscale Manhattan nightclub that featured Brazilian music. Here in New York she linked with producer Claus Ogerman, who was eager to make an album with her. While the songs got recorded, the album was mysteriously unreleased, and Joyce slowly lost contact with Ogerman over the years. The album is finally seeing the light of day via Far Out Recordings, and it provides a crucial window into this era of Joyce's life, both professionally and personally.

It was at Cachaça that Joyce met her current husband, the percussionist Tutty Moreno. She knew him from his performances on famous albums like Veloso's *Transa* and Gilberto Gil's *Expresso 2222*. He didn't know her at all, but he was transfixed by her guitar playing and singing, and the two hit it off. "When we had the chance to play together," Joyce recounts, "the first thing I said to him was, wow, it's

Raymond Ross (Moreno); Courtesy Joyce (Senise)

like you're driving a sports car. There was something very elegant about the way he played." In the past, Joyce had difficulties finding a drummer with whom she could feel at ease, but Tutty's playing was a perfect fit, and he ended up playing on *Natureza*.

One song is even dedicated to him. "Moreno" finds Joyce singing of Tutty as someone who knows the *"rhythm of nature"*, and the track's syncopated beat and cyclical guitar figures swirl around each other, conjuring up the density of life and song in the world around us. Joyce goes on to talk about the Gaia theory, which involves the interconnectedness of all things on Earth. "I think that music represents that kind of connection because it's a form of art that goes beyond words, language, *everything* – it goes straight to a person's emotions."

Joyce's compatibility with Tutty was important, and it becomes clearer the more she talks about him. "He's a man who has no fear of empowered women, like so many men do. He's one of the few men that I know who can be by the side of a woman who has her own way, and be confident enough not to feel threatened."

It's a stark contrast from earlier in the conversation when I asked about Angelo. Then, she simply explained, "The male mind is kind of funny sometimes. It's very complicated for a man to accept that a woman might have her own brilliance, her own shine." She sums up the relationship with Tutty sweetly: "We developed a language, a musical idiom, together."

Another insightful song on *Natureza* is "Feminina", one of Joyce's most famous works. Compared to the version that appears on her 1980 album of the same name, this is more sprawling, traversing more than 11 minutes via jazzy excursions and joyful bossa nova rhythms. Joyce compares the song to a mandala, and considers it a neverending conversation between different generations of women. The song begins with a daughter asking her mother what it means to be feminine, and the mother explains that it's not about one's hair or how one looks, but something deeper and more meaningful.

"My mother was always very concerned about me," Joyce says. "I would wear T-shirts, jeans and Converse but she wanted to see me with makeup and high heels." The song doubles as a response to her mother and a message to her own daughters, of which she now had three. That conversation through family lineage continues in *Natureza* too, at least in spirit. One song, "Descompassadamente", was rewritten and appears on Joyce's 1999 album *Hard Bossa* as "Todos Os Santos". There, she sings to the saints to end suffering alongside her daughter Ana Martins.

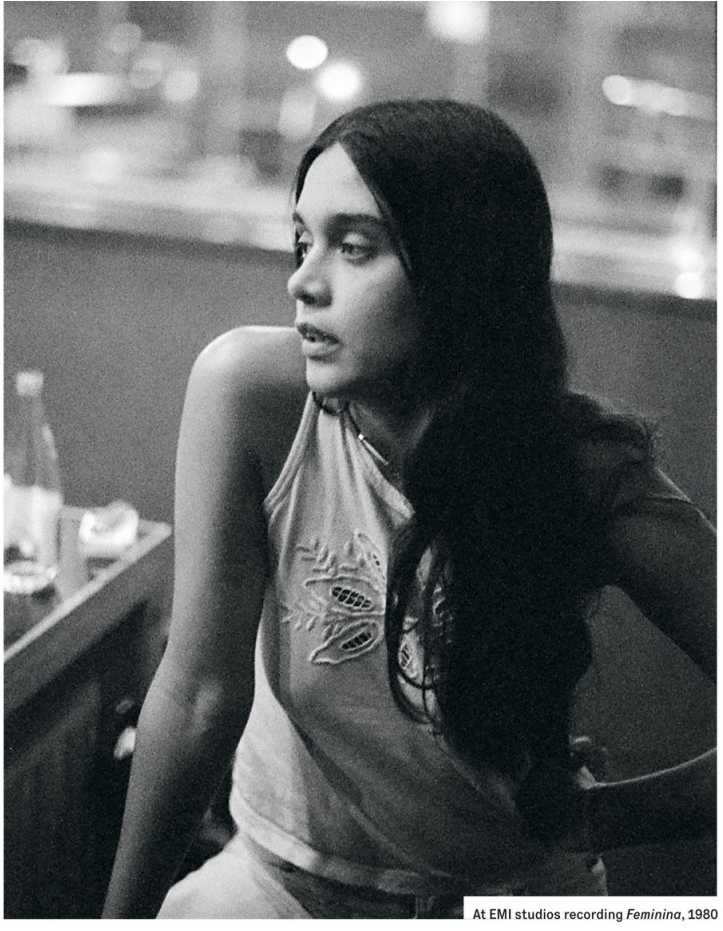
Despite *Natureza* being shelved for decades, Joyce had much to celebrate in the ensuing years. The *Feminina* album was a major success – especially noteworthy because Joyce had full control of its arrangements, compositions and ideas. But just after finishing her 1981 follow-up *Água E Luz*, she discovered that a producer at EMI had taken the backing track of her hit "Clareana" and put the voice of another singer on top for a different album he was making. Joyce called the label to demand they desist. The label's response: "We shouldn't do that, but we can." Joyce called a lawyer, the album was taken off the market, and the label let her go.

This victory had repercussions, however. She kept getting calls from record companies who'd send flowers and ask her to come in for meetings. She'd end up staying in the waiting area for hours with nothing happening. This same scenario occurred multiple times. Decades later, she reports, she found out that the producer agreed with representatives of all the major labels that no one in Brazil should sign her. Joyce would serve as an example to any other artist who'd want to challenge them.

Reflecting on the experience now, Joyce sees a silver lining. "Being an independent artist gives you freedom," she smiles. In 1983 she self-released *Tardes Cariocas*, one of the most radiant Brazilian records of the 1980s. It features Egberto Gismonti on some tracks, and the closing "Baracumbara" is one of her most striking compositions. Across seven minutes she sings without any lyrics, her emotions distilled into the flitting rhythms of her vocals as they glide and soar with rolling guitar melodies and Gismonti's mesmerizing hurdy-gurdy.

Joyce has continued to make music through to the present, and there are treasures to be found throughout her discography, such as 2001's *Gafiera Moderna*, where you can hear her intertwine her vocals with those of the late Elza Soares on "Samba De Silvia". Joyce is also fond of *Ilha Brasil*, *Tudo* and *Palavra E Som*, but she's adamant that her favourite album will always be her next. The recent *Brasileiras Canções* was written during the pandemic, and "Tantas Vidas" is another notable song that considers the female perspective. As she and Mônica Salmaso sing about how a beautiful woman can consider herself ugly, there's poignancy in hearing familiar Brazilian rhythms employed by a singer-songwriter whose whole life has telegraphed the lived experiences of women. It's a reminder that Joyce's whole oeuvre is both musically and thematically timeless. "At my age the next step should probably be retiring," she laughs. But she has no plans to do so just yet, even as she envisions how she'll go out: "I'll probably die on some crappy stage, but I intend to be there until the very end."

After a rich life without compromises, she's happy with how things have turned out, including the delayed release of *Natureza*. "[Ogerman] wanted me to go back and rerecord all the lyrics in English," she explains, disapproving of such an idea. She then shares a turn of phrase derived from a Moraes lyric: *"A vida tem sempre razão"* (*"Life is always right"*). "We have to believe that," she declares, continuing that she's an optimist who loves her resilience. For her, those two things go hand in hand. "We are destined to be happy. We have to work for that, but that is our destiny." □ Joyce's *Natureza* is released by Far Out Recordings



At EMI studios recording *Feminina*, 1980

Courtesy Joyce

Looking For A Certain Ratio

Dynamic Baltimore quartet

Horse Lords

unleash the power of the harmonic system and challenge the Western bias of musical convention through just intonation. By **Dan Wilson**. Photography by **Margaret Rorison**

Making music ultimately boils down to sounding out a system for communicable emotional potential. At its most elementary, musicians define their own systems according to their whims, idiosyncrasies or habits; in every instance of music, a group or soloist consciously or unconsciously agrees upon a rhythmic/harmonic framework.

But there's an overarching system that has steadily engulfed instrumental music over the last few centuries, affecting nearly all sub-systems, namely the equal tempered musical scale. One group which has galloped away from this stupendous paddock is Horse Lords, who have spent the past decade sounding out just intonation as a catalyst for change and wider systems awareness. Formed in Baltimore in 2010, the quartet make a startlingly persuasive case for pure tunings in their harmonically integrated instrumentation, and drumming which evokes whole-number ratios polyrhythmically, resulting in music that's equally suited to classroom listening (in the manner of Diana Deutsch's musical illusions and paradoxes) and heady festival freakouts. By escaping equal temperament (where a major third is four semitones) and using the pure harmonic intervals of just intonation (where a major third is exactly a 5:4 ratio), Horse Lords are able to harness previously obscured textural, timbral and psychoacoustic possibilities, exploring perceptual phenomena in ways that, until recently, were technically impractical for touring bands.

Digital technology facilitates alternative tuning experiments not only by making abstract numbers audible, but also by providing access to niche musical resources and worldwide communities. Back in 2006, when Horse Lords' future guitarist Owen Gardner began getting to grips with just intonation, online information was scant; one rare oasis was theorist-composer Kyle Gann's LiveJournal.

This accounts somewhat for how distinctive the band are. Grassroots level research has its own benefits in setting a uniquer course, as Gardner tells me: "There's something to be said for being stuck with your own path; having minimal points of reference." The latter gradually opened up – the work of composers such as Maryanne Amacher, La Monte Young and James Tenney became more readily available over this period, all of whom were always key influences on the group. Researcher Amy Cimini has made Amacher's work much more accessible recently. As for La Monte Young, his legendary inaccessibility is exemplified by the tale of his strongly worded complaints to the British Library in the 1990s after it catalogued a recording made by a staff member who, while in the US, had taken the initiative to capture a radio broadcast onto PCM digital tape.

In the space of little over a decade, the internet democratised opportunities to experience just intonation, allowing the young group to refine their hard-won expertise and put it into practice. Horse Lords are both the outcome of, and active participants in, a still ongoing paradigm shift in tuning and technology.

Prior to the group's formation, Andrew Bernstein owned a small MIDI keyboard, and he recalls the excitement when an early version of Manuel Op de Coul's gateway to microtonalism – the scale experimentation software Scala – was downloaded: "It was like, 'You have a MIDI keyboard. We've got to plug this in so we can hear what these intervals sound like,' and so we stayed up all night trying to figure out how to make the software work with the keyboard." Perseverance clearly pays off, as Horse Lords are today a formidable force showcasing some of the most outre and progressive ideas in sound.

The presence of a laptop in the group's live set-up sees it frequently miscredited as having a role in signal processing. Certain justly-tuned chords that would be excitedly identified as sounding crunchy by microtonal enthusiasts tend to have that crunch misattributed to electronic effects by new listeners. The newbie's finger of suspicion points at the innocent comradely object: the laptop. "When there's complex harmonic interaction, people come up to me and ask, 'What was the laptop running?' and it's like, 'Nothing! That was just everyone playing together!'" remarks bassist and electronicist Max Eilbacher. The laptop lends textural spice, but does not interfere with the instruments' signals, at least thus far.

Held in the groove by drummer Sam Haberman, how is it that Eilbacher, Gardner and saxophonist Bernstein can produce simulacra of electronic tone from their instruments? In short, it's because just

Horse Lords in Baltimore, September 2022 (from left): Andrew Bernstein, Max Eilbacher, Owen Gardner, Sam Haberman

intonation tunings intimately correspond to natural harmonics which are the building blocks of timbre, and so when the harmonically dense well-tuned electric guitar, saxophone and bass combine, the effect can be one of unified timbral movement which, for those with no other point of reference, harkens back to electronic music's engagement with exotic timbres. The tightness of Horse Lords' performances further strengthens this effect.

Reciprocation between timbre and tone is one of the group's sonic ideals. "Reclaiming pitch through the idea of timbre and vice versa… pitch and timbre are intertwined," enthuses Eilbacher. "And the possibilities of that are really exciting."

Here, a summary of the historic tensions between 12-tone and pure tuning systems would not go amiss. Such mathematico-musical dramas animate the work of Horse Lords, who have presented themselves as a just intonation band since their inception.

It is becoming commonplace to call attention to the colonialist aspects of the old 12-tone equal tempered scale, a now near-ubiquitous system where the ratio between any two adjacent notes is always identical, which was foisted upon other cultures through many channels, from missionaries' hymn sheets to mass-produced electronics. Citing critique from other directions, Gardner remembers encountering Susan McClary's book *Feminine Endings*, which offered a curveball feminist takedown of Western music, and 12-tone music by association: "That set my mind in motion a little bit on the things that troubled me about Western music," he recalls. "Functional harmony is not yet totally destroyed (which I think it *ought* to be) and [McClary] does take that on, which was very intriguing to me."

Music as a vector perpetuating the social system it was conceived in? This chicken and egg question fascinates Horse Lords, whose output could be seen as a Trojan horse with the capacity to spur on alternatives to dead-end late capitalism. Microtonal composer Ben Johnston once hinted that a cause of the malaises in society might be the 12-tone system's inherent disharmony – where certain common intervals end up sounding slightly flat or sharp, compromised by each semitone interval in the system being the same – which is magnified when widely misapplied in rock music. Nevertheless, the ease with which this not-quite natural 12-tone system achieved uptake via fretted instruments, the pianoforte and latterly corporate electronic instruments, owes largely to its efficiency, offering harmony and notation as a kind of habit-forming package deal.

This ingeniously sidesteps a quirk of physics that Kyle Gann (writing in *The Arithmetic Of Listening*) termed "the cosmic joke" . A constant slippage occurs whenever a perfectly in-tune musical scale is mapped out as equal steps – this idealised, mathematically coherent scale would be maddeningly non-userfriendly, as it does not create an exact octave, where the ratio of frequencies is exactly double (or half). This ideal scale would feature non-repeating pitches spiralling out unmanageably. Keyboarded instruments, with their extensive range of notes, then bear the slapstick brunt of this joke. It hit pianoforte-fixated European musical culture head-on, and damage limitation demanded significant compromise. Whereas just intonation, which creates a harmonic scale using frequency ratios made out of whole numbers, imposes upper harmonic limits to combat this problem, 12-tone equal temperament sacrificed in-tuneness for tonal versatility, nudging notes slightly out of tune to keep them consistent across every octave.

The equal temperament system spread in tandem with music's mechanisation from the 17th century onwards. Significant casualties of this pitch adjustment were the awkward 7th, 11th and 13th natural harmonics which were condemned to a long obscurity, but their sonic fingerprints abound in pure tuning systems and were by no means obliterated entirely.

By their nature, harmonics always lurk within single musical notes, since every instrumental note contains a mix of pure tones derived from a gamut known as the harmonic series. Distinct combinations of these tones are what give each instrument its characteristic timbre. It says much about the entrenchment of harmonic *unawareness* that it seems something of a magic trick when the harmonics within a piano note are revealed during music lessons or TED talks (in this respect the music of Horse Lords possesses a zest of stage magic too). The harmonic series hides

in plain sight within common musical sounds, but is spotlighted more prominently in countless forms of folk music, blues music's blue notes, medieval ensembles, and popular electronic music where they constitute byproducts of resonant filters (in Underworld's 1994 trance epic "Rez", particularly in live versions – the 11th harmonic fleetingly reaches out in a flourish at the end of each long melodic cycle).

Horse Lords can sound like they transpose many characteristically electronic aspects of a track like "Rez" – the harmonic riff ultra-syncopated to the point of going out of phase – to real-world instruments, which requires considerable practice. Of course, a techno track like "Rez" is evidently inspired by older African rhythms, hinting at the underlying human continuum that technologies tend to mask. Owen Gardner elaborates: "What's interesting to me about electronic music is that it can do things humans cannot do, but it's still constrained by what human music can be."

The machine shadows the human – it essentially becomes a human counterpart, which chimes with the theme implied by the title of the new Horse Lords album *Comradely Objects*, a concept derived from the Soviet avant garde.

Following Horse Lords' breakthrough 2016 album *Interventions*, whose dizzying "Truthers" received heavy airplay, the music press struggled to pigeonhole them due to the cross-genre resonances discussed above. Now, with their fifth studio album, the style has crystallised into something that's just quintessentially their own. The group's signature effect is the cycling of multipart melodic motifs, systematically reshuffling them into different rhythmic structures, thereby altering the perceptual meaning of the musical motif relative to the beat. It's akin to viewing a sculpture from new angles. The album exhibits this, alongside all the familiar polyrhythmic interplay, textural adventurousness, harmonic crunch, tension between order and chaos, and motorik-esque forward momentum.

Comradely Objects also features the group's most ambitious attempt at hocketing yet – the deceptively textbookish "Plain Hunt On Four", which when examined reveals itself as an accomplished feat of note-juggling between instruments. "I believe we practised that more intensively than anything else we've done", says Gardner. Bernstein estimates they spent four or five months of rehearsal for the eight minute piece, and it's unlikely to be heard live for awhile – Gardner confesses it had to be "manicured a bit in post-production".

Produced in the midst of pandemic uncertainty, the new album was wrought without the prospect of live performance, and so the release features more post-production than before. It carries more cinematic depth as a result. That's not to say there's any less creative density than in their previous work. 2020's *The Common Task* featured a collaboration performed with the Peabody Conservatory's Now Hear This ensemble. This was commissioned as part of the ensemble's programme themed around the idea of revolution, for which Horse Lords composed "Integral Accident". This piece drew upon Lindenmayer systems to reflect this theme – biologist Aristid Lindenmayer conceived a mathematical process in 1968 as a means to represent plant growth and generate fractals, featuring successive iterations, or miniature revolutions, that call forth lifelike patterns with self-similar inner structure.

Another rigorous collaboration took the form of an opera. *The First Thing That Happens* was written and directed by Lola B Pierson in early 2020, and opened the novel prospect for the ensemble to compose around Pierson's libretto, propelling the use of electronic, sampler-based interventions.

The group's backgrounds in experimentalism make them especially adaptable to new challenges. Participation in Baltimore improv groups was a decent grounding in inter-performer awareness, a quality so integral to the current group. Gardner and Bernstein both studied at Baltimore's Goucher College in the mid-2000s, and met Eilbacher through the city's fertile experimental music community. They played together as part of the larger group Teeth Mountain, performing percussive, densely instrumental drone-ritual excursions with definite hallmarks of just tunings, mostly via Gardner's instrument of choice at that time, the cello. Bowed instruments have a habit of widening harmonic perception, almost as if a genetic trace of the cello's ancestor – the harmonic based single-stringed tromba marina – makes itself felt. Through Gardner's cello, Bernstein developed an interest in new tuning possibilities.

To achieve more melodic movement, Gardner refretted a guitar for 13-limit just intonation. "The 13 part of that doesn't get used very often, so for all practical purposes it's 11-limit," clarifies Gardner, who chose it out of the many possible just intonation systems for its adaptability to guitar. Saxophones can naturally accommodate microtonal fingerings, yet there were a few different ones before Bernstein found a model with the requisite fineness of pitch. Max Eilbacher introduced Sam Haberman to the others, and the idea of a just intonation band took flight. Eilbacher's bass was refretted a year or so later when it became clear that it would benefit from the ability to achieve extra angles of consonance with the other instruments.

Their self-titled 2012 EP was an exhilarating two track release compromising "Wildcat Strike" and "Who Taught You To Hate Yourself?", the latter named after Malcolm X's 1962 speech. Weighty track titles are hung conspicuously throughout the Horse Lords catalogue. There's a keen preoccupation with ideals, ideologues and utopianism; architects' unborn brainchildren crop up a few times. Architecture's influence on human behaviour mirrors Horse Lords' interests in how musical systems might stimulate social reform, following the metaphor made famous by the German idealists in the 18th century: music as frozen architecture.

"Radiant City" has Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse as its namesake – an unrealised vision (notwithstanding its book publication in 1933). Meanwhile, the new album's opening track "Zero Degree Machine" corresponds to a wilfully opaque concept of spatial relationships proclaimed by Kazuo Shinohara in the 1970s – the Japanese architect's work was mostly theoretical, and he later confessed to using deliberately strange language to construct theories of space. Shinohara's concept, in turn, is presumably a nod to *Writing Degree Zero*, French writer Roland Barthes's dense and paradoxical 1953 book reflecting on what language might be if it carried no coercive pretence or stylistic baggage.

Perhaps music writers carry their own burden of stylistic baggage. The track "Mess Mend" unexpectedly adds a new colour to the instrumental palette with a piano, along with other novel electronic effects, which, by automatic reflex, triggers comparison to the Happy Mondays 1990 hit "Step On", albeit a version which might be recorded in an alternate universe. Horse Lords' utopian rubric augments the impression of a music crossed over from a parallel reality; forward-looking movements impart a sense of what could have been, and what still could be. As for the likeness with the Madchester anthem, it's in part due to the shared presence of the Korg M1 piano sound, an archetype of house music (and, notably, a close relative of the Korg 01/W used by La Monte Young in The Forever Bad Blues Band for its retunability).

The M1 is a fetishised item reworked into the Russian avant garde's ideal of a 'comradely object'. Its sounds feature on countless chart records, yet here Horse Lords employ a soft synth version of it, retuned to harmonically meld with the other instruments. Even the tom drums are tuned correspondingly, and the overall effect is one of tonal cooperation in which every part has its distinct role in an inviolable whole. The comradely object is not an artificially seductive superfluity or a status-aware extravagance, but an honest device to aid social cohesion, a comrade; a friend.

The Russian theme is continued in the track's title, borrowed from a fantastical piece of literature by Marietta Shaginyan published in part form in 1924, telling the caper story of a workers' underground resistance movement called Mess Mend fighting against capitalist rule. Its style surreally appropriates Western pulp literature to push revolutionary concepts (a theme is emerging here), and each part has a futuristic illustrated photomontage by Alexander Rodchenko. The book is obscure today.

"The book has a very unhinged energy to it – totally bonkers – but also has this wonderful utopian energy, that's the same sort of energy animating a lot of the other references, both here and on our other records," remarks Gardner. But the Horse Lords track, he explains, is "not like a programmatic piece about the triumph of [the story's hero] Mike Thingsmaster… like many of these titles it's more of an energetic connection." Literary scholars suggest that Shaginyan's title references mending the mess made around the world by capitalism – a task certainly high on Horse Lords' to-do list.

"We were taking inspiration from the early 20th century Russian avant garde, and whether our music would be recognisable as comradely objects to the originators of these terms, I'm not sure," reflects Bernstein. "But we were interested in the idea of utilitarian objects, and the idea of the comradely object and what that could mean for music. I don't know if we achieved it – we're not philosophers – but it was something that was on our mind." Gardner interjects: "It's probably something that could only be assessed in a post-revolutionary context."

"We'll have to get back to you on that one," concludes Eilbacher. ☐ Horse Lords' *Comradely Objects* is released by RVNG Intl this month

The Grand

Unified Theory

From intimate trios to epic orchestras the kaleidoscopic visions of **Tyshawn Sorey** bring together instant composition and rigorous logic in a radical gesture of resisting all categories. By **Stewart Smith.** Photography by **Hannah Price**

Tyshawn Sorey is in the thick of it. It's only been a few days since he returned from Lucerne, Switzerland, where he premiered two orchestral works. Now he's deep in rehearsals for *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife),* a multidisciplinary work that features Sorey conducting bass baritone Davóne Tines, a 24-voice choir and three instrumentalists, alongside visual art by Julie Mehretu and choreography by FlexN pioneer Reggie 'Regg Roc' Gray. It expands on a premiere in February 2022 for the 50th anniversary of the Rothko Chapel in Houston, recontextualising Rothko's paintings and the Morton Feldman composition they inspired.

Director Peter Sellars describes *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife*) as a ceremony, a ritual. "We don't need any more shows," he asserts in a promotional film, "we actually need ways to gather peacefully and positively. And we need sites of memory in the prescence of mass erasure." Sellars has constructed a chapel-like structure around an octagonal platform on which the dancers perform. Above hang eight large screens projected with Mehretu's paintings. Colours move in shoal-like formations, illuminated by stage lighting that brings out Rothko-like depths, with musicians and audience alike cocooned within the new chapel. As Sellars puts it, "We are not there as spectators, we are participants."

The ritual quality identified by Sellars runs through Sorey's work. One of the most formidable artists of our time, the composer and multi-instrumentalist is renowned for music that explores duration and space but is also full of beauty and incident. Having made his name as a prodigiously talented drummer on the New York avant jazz scene, the 42 year old has grown into a composer and conceptualist of limitless imagination, straddling jazz, contemporary classical and experimental new music, defying the racist and classist gatekeeping that has kept these worlds apart.

"The piece has evolved, I think, since February," Sorey explains over Zoom. "The first version of it was a reference to the Rothko Chapel and the Feldman composition of the same name, whereas now, we've evolved past that." The title of the Houston piece refers to the play of light on Rothko's paintings, their black surfaces slowly revealing deep shades of red and blue. "That was his own experience, and now we're dealing with the concept of monochromatic light, but with colour and with situations that we are now faced with in the world, things that are going on today. How would we situate a work like the Rothko Chapel to what our current life experiences are?"

Sorey answers that question directly in the piece's final section, where the viola quotes the spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child", echoing Feldman's introduction of a "quasi-Hebraic" melody towards the end of his *Rothko Chapel*. While Feldman meditates on his Jewish heritage, Sorey speaks to the African-American perspective. Sorey's experience of being unsettled by the pandemic and the past year's police killings of Black people informs his work, which like the piece that inspired it, takes on a memorial function.

Sorey talks of the impact the project has had on the dancers, who can find moving to such slow music emotionally and physically demanding. "There was a lot of discussion of what the rehearsals were like for [the dancers] and how the music really affected them in a big way. They've had to face a lot of different things such as grief or loss of a loved one. It must have been really powerful for them." He has also revised the composition, adding some 25 minutes of new material to take it up to 75 minutes. "And of course, that's going to make the choreography longer too. It can be very physically taxing for them. But at the same time, I think this touches on another aspect, the physicality of live performance, which is another very important concern of mine."

Born in 1980, Sorey prefers not to talk about his early childhood, describing it as a "dark time", but he opens up when discussing the teachers and family members who recognised his musical talent. "I was in special education for six years. And finally, in 1992, I had enrolled in regular school, whatever that means," he reflects. "There was a music teacher at my junior high school who was also a jazz musician and improvisor. His name was Michael Cupelo. Every morning I would get up at 7am and be there at the school. It didn't start till 8:30am. So, I would spend maybe the first hour and a half at the school with my music teacher, just having him show me some stuff… he got me connected to Charlie Parker's music, he got me connected to bebop and the swing era language. He also got me connected very much to the music of Miles Davis, who I was most curious about, because I had heard of his music before. He also allowed me to experience playing a drum set without being kicked off of it!"

Sorey eventually persuaded his grandfather Herman to buy him a kit. "He said, 'look, if I buy you this drum set, you better be playing these drums all the time.' We didn't have a lot of money. We came from hardly anything, so it was a blessing. And every day, I would be in the basement working, just playing drums, playing along to recordings."

After junior high, Sorey was awarded a scholarship to the Newark School of Arts. Working with orchestral

musicians like the late Charles Klelis, Sorey developed his classical studies, learning solo repertoire in trombone and drums. "I was seen as kind of a freak to a lot of those people, because it's like, this guy thinks he's better than everybody, because he's always practising." But Sorey had no qualms about putting the hours in. "If this is something I have to do for my life, I have to do this. I took it very seriously.

"I would either be practising or working in a music lab that was run by a cat named Louis Melchor," he continues. "He had the key to a lot of the music rooms in the school, and so he would be there 5am, doing a lot of MIDI programming and things like that. And so I would get there right around the same time, sometimes even before… it was either that or the dangerous streets. By that time, the crack epidemic was really big, gang violence was also pretty strong. I grew up in a very rough area of Newark, so that was the thing kept me away from all of that, just spending hours and hours practising.

"I was also somewhat socially awkward, probably still am to a degree. I was the type of person who was a loner, never really subscribed to peer pressure, never really subscribed to what other people's ideas were about what kind of music I listened to, or what I was supposed to play."

While the school offered Sorey many opportunities, he was disappointed by its lack of a jazz programme. "So I just took matters into my own hands and asked several other classmates of mine if we wanted to form a group." Their efforts caught the attention of Halim Suliman, a teacher at the school who subsequently introduced him to Amiri Baraka. "He took us under his wing and exposed us to the Black Arts Movement and why that was so important to the history of Newark."

Sorey came to the attention of the organist Radam Schwartz, who invited him to play local jazz sessions. He fell in with musicians including drummers Cecil Brooks III and Billy Hart, and saxophonists Bruce Williams and James Stewart. Another important outlet was Kimako's Blues People, a music and poetry salon run out of Baraka's Newark basement, which led him to elders Steve Colson, Grachan Moncur III and John Hicks, and learning to connect his music to politics.

A scholarship to William Paterson University gave Sorey the opportunity to deepen his practice. He was already familiar with the boundary-breaking work of the AACM, and was an avid fan of the European avant garde. Recognising Stockhausen and Anthony Braxton as part of the same experimental continuum helped shape his direction as a composer.

Outside university, Sorey was soon making a name for himself as a drummer, and in his sophomore year the pianist Michele Rosewoman hired him for a tour, leading to subsequent engagement with bandleaders like Dave Douglas and Steve Coleman. He also came into the orbit of younger musicians like Vijay Iyer and Steve Lehman, joining their group Fieldwork in 2004.

Harmonically complex, yet propulsive and dynamic, Fieldwork is one of the key ensembles in 21st century jazz. Sorey was a perfect fit, both as a drummer and composer. "That was a really fun time, just getting to workshop our compositions together," he recalls. "These rehearsals would go on for hours, just trying to find possibilities within these schematic forms that we would come up with." Meanwhile, Sorey was establishing himself as a bandleader with his Oblique ensemble, featuring saxophonist Loren Stillman, bassist Carlo DeRosa, pianist Carl Maguire and later guitarist Ryan Clackner. "That music was very much influenced by Anthony Braxton. And we would be performing these long sets that would run about 90 minutes to two hours, of maybe eight or nine compositions."

In the group's angular, slippery music, mistakes were treated as new structural material, and rhythmic complexity was explored. However, Sorey's growing interest in Zen Buddhism, spurred by a 2006 visit to Japan, led him to question this approach. *That/Not* (2007) and *Koan* (2009) saw him introducing more space and stillness into his music, all while experimenting with a range of compositional devices.

The life of a freelance musician and being on the road for half the year took its toll, and the 2008 financial crash brought the precarity of his situation into focus. "Getting on planes every single day, going from country to country to country. I started to hate it. I can grow as a musician, but why do I have to get on a plane to do that? At 27 years old, I just said, man, I can't keep doing this, this is not really the lifestyle I want."

Attracted by Lehman's tales of studying at Wesleyan, Sorey applied to the Connecticut University's masters programme, where he immediately began studies with Braxton and Alvin Lucier. "I had a lot of musicians ridicule me for making that decision: 'You should be going to the school of playing music here in the streets in New York.' I've done that for years! It made me realise that it was OK for me to study music in an academic setting, along with doing my own composition." He began a doctorate at Columbia University in 2011, studying under the likes of George E Lewis and Fred Lerdahl. It took him a while to settle in. While Sorey was interested in extending what he calls the "post-Cage, post-Feldman continuum", his classmates weren't so much into improvisation. "And I'm feeling less of myself. I can't even tell you the number of times that I thought about quitting… I thank George and Fred from the bottom of my heart for really getting me

Tyshawn Sorey conducting *Autoschediasms* at Lucerne Festival, 2022

Patrick Hertzmann

"I was somewhat socially awkward, probably still am to a degree. I was a loner, I never really subscribed to peer pressure, other people's ideas of music I should listen to, or what I was supposed to play"

through that experience."

The full breadth of Sorey's interests came through in *Inner Spectrum Of Variables*, his 2016 album with the double trio of Corey Smythe and Chris Tordnini, and string players Kyle Armbrust, Fung Chern Hwei and Rubin Kodheli. The music draws on multiple idioms and traditions — chamber music, free improvisation, klezmer, Ethiopian jazz – yet feels like a unified statement. In one of their composition lessons, Lerdahl had remarked that Sorey's compositions sounded like they were in two different languages, when what he should aim for is a music that speaks one unified language. How, asked Lerdahl, would you be able to do that using all of these disparate influences? "It was the fall of 2015," recalls Sorey. "And that that was when the beginnings of *Inner Spectrum Of Variables* started to happen. I'll tell you the other thing he said, too. 'You want your written compositions to be as coherent as your improvisations… as an improvisor, you're very clear about what you're doing, but compositionally, you seem to feel like you're trying too hard to be something else. You want your composition to be as logical and as well thought out as how you would approach an improvisation.'"

It's a lesson that Sorey continues to value. "Whenever I'm writing a piece of music, I want to make sure that it's as clear as possible, a unified sense of expression."

The aim of unifying disparate elements comes into sharp focus on 2018's *Pillars,* a monumental work of drone, ritual and volcanic improvisation. Arranged for four double basses, trumpet, trombone and guitar, with Sorey adding dramatic flourishes of percussion and Tibetan dungchen horn, it recalls the glacial density of *Vade Mecum*, Bill Dixon's 1994 album with bassists William Parker and Barry Guy – an influence Sorey readily acknowledges. Éliane Radigue's acoustic music is another key reference. "Not only are you dealing with music that has, quote-unquote, drone, but how does that drone affect you and your sense of memory, your sense of being? That's what Radigue's music, along with Feldman, did for me in terms of experiencing it and loving how it sounds. I mean, it's beautiful sounding music." Given the sheer heaviness of the music and the volatility of Joe Morris's electric guitar, metal is also part of the mix. "Metal's definitely in there, too. Gorguts, Meshuggah – that kind of technical metal is very much what I've been into."

Pillars crackles with improvisational energy, but it's built around a strong compositional framework. "I had already composed the structure of it before we got together in the studio. It was just a matter of how we were going to record that material. I remember sitting down with the players and giving them a roadmap of how I'm going to want certain things to develop and transform." Drawing on Bill Dixon's approach of "getting the musicians in the room", Sorey made sure the musicians were fully versed in the composed material and conducting language before they began improvising. "Because then when we're improvising, you're already in the room."

That process, Sorey concludes, is why *Pillars* has the unified language that it has. "It goes back to what Roscoe Mitchell talks about, how really good improvisation is really good composition. And when you improvise something, it has to be at the same level that the composition is setting up, or otherwise the composition itself is going to feel very passé."

The idea of getting musicians to think compositionally in the moment – a principle that runs through the work of Dixon, the AACM and Cecil Taylor – fascinates Sorey. "How do these musicians do that? How are they able to not have to sit there and write scores and scores of music with this Eurocentric concept of notation, and yet still have a distinct voice, a distinct vocabulary? So that's what I tried to achieve in *Pillars* and things after that for large groups."

Autoschediasms, described by Sorey as "an ever-evolving duet for conductor and orchestra", applies post-AACM approaches to a concert setting. An extension of Butch Morris's conduction techniques and Anthony Braxton's language music, *Autoschediasms* is a conductor's vocabulary designed to generate real-time composition from a system of cues. The system features three distinct methods. *Gesture* is a series of cues indicating specific actions for the musicians to perform on the conductor's downbeat. *Autonomy* is a series of ten numerical signs indicating specific actions that the musicians can perform on their own accord and in their own manner. While these build on Morris's conduction and Braxton's language music, *Category* is Sorey's own innovation. Using white boards for cues, it's the most involved of the methods. "It's not only about gesture and language music, but also about what kind of behaviour I'm going to want to happen," he describes. "What if I wanted to juxtapose several events one after another? Or what if I wanted to repeat that same juxtaposition over and over again? What if I wanted the musicians to focus within a particular harmonic or chromatic field or whatever? And so that's what makes *Autoschediasms* what it is, by having these three different components working together."

The interest in sonority displayed in the ensemble singing of *Autoschediasms* extends to Sorey's notated orchestra works, not least *For George Lewis*, also recorded by Alarm Will Sound. Unfolding across 53 minutes, the piece deals with the layering of long tones, before blossoming into a horn-led melody in the final minutes. One of several compositions named for mentors and heroes, it borrows the structure of Lewis's *The Will To Adorn*. "That piece knocked me dead when I first heard it," he reflects. "It turned my composition world upside down. One thing that [Lewis] said before the premiere was, 'Oh, man, I just like to make noise.' The music was indeed very noisy, but at the same time, there was a particular elegance to it. And the title *The Will to Adorn* was what really made sense to me. Of course, there's beauty in playing an instrument conventionally, but then how do you turn that into some other kinds of beauty? Or how do you complicate the way that sound is received by the listener?"

Lewis took the idea of adornment from a 1934 essay by Zora Neale Hurston, where she observes the penchant in African-American culture for "decorating a decoration". The principle stuck with Sorey, inspiring the title of his 2019 album with pianist Marilyn Crispell, *The Adornment Of Time*. Lasting over an hour, this astonishing piece of improvised music moves from near silence to thunderous density.

"I am a Black man that goes without saying. But I'm not looking to compose music that belongs in a certain box or proves my Blackness"

For George Lewis also deals in duration, with the repetition of certain elements, and the accumulation of gestures. Sorey likens this effect to the way natural light transforms the colours in a room, a phenomenon he observed at Rothko Chapel. "This idea of adornment, what is happening within a particular measure of music, it's always changing."

Following his AACM elders, Sorey has been at the forefront of breaking down the artificial barriers between so-called jazz and classical music. He's made a point of platforming Black soloists, but he rejects the description of Black composer. "I only compose the music as myself. I am a Black man, that goes without saying, but I'm not looking to compose music that belongs in a certain box, or proves my Blackness. For me, Blackness is resisting categories. I can make whatever music I want to make, I can listen to whatever I want to listen to."

While he acknowledges that Lucerne Festival's recent branding of itself as a "diverse" event was well meaning, he is uncomfortable with the rendering of artists' identity. "I don't think anybody should advertise the fact that they're inviting Black artists or gender non-conforming artists. I think they should just do it."

While Sorey's orchestral pieces are non-programmatic, his vocal works directly relate to the Black experience, specifically grief and trauma. "These are things that I tend to look at as a reality that I face every day, growing up as a Black person. In instrumental music people don't think about the Black experience, but in vocal music it's right in their face. And when I make music for vocalists, I try to do it in a way that is reflective of my own experiences, conveyed to whoever wants to hear it."

Perle Noire, an oratorio about Josephine Baker, was Sorey's first foray into vocal music. Written for soprano Julia Bullock, it resets songs sung by Baker in Paris so that the music better supports the poignant lyrics. Sorey gives the example of "Si J'etais Blanche" ("If I Were White"). "Listen to that composition, and then listen to the accompanying music behind that. There was a dissonance there. You have a French lyricist who wrote the song for Josephine Baker to sing about the complexities surrounding her being a Black woman, and you've got this cutesy music backing it up? It made no sense to me. So I said, what if we created a piece of music that actually supports the text?" The results are deeply affecting, Sorey's art songs set to spare and stately arrangements that touch on chamber music, Appalachian folk and bossa nova. The success of *Perle Noire* led to the tenor Lawrence Brownlee commissioning another vocal piece, the song cycle *Cycles Of My Being*, featuring lyrics by Black poet Terrance Hayes. Sorey considers his increasingly prolific vocal music to be the culmination of his career as a composer.

Throughout these varied activities, Sorey has maintained his engagement with jazz and improvised music. In recent years, he's made distinctive drum and piano contributions to albums by Vijay Iyer and Hafez Modirzadeh, formed a raging power trio with Bill Laswell and Mike Sopko, and recorded a superb duo set with violinist Jennifer Curtis.

Another area of exploration is electronic music. This autumn sees Sorey renew his collaboration with King Britt at the Blacktronika: Where I Stand festival. Their percussion and modular synth duets album *Untitled One* was a highlight of 2021, informed by a shared interest in house, techno and improvisation. Sorey was amazed to discover that Britt was behind some of the house records his uncle played to him back in the day. "I just felt an instant connection to him." He laughs when I ask him to expand on his interest in electronic music. "That's the hidden activity." He is tempted, however, to put out a mixtape of beats he made during the pandemic. With a love of 90s producers like DJ Premier and Timbaland, Sorey builds his tracks out of samples. "I'm sitting around making all kinds of beats, programming, synthesizer work. I love doing that stuff."

Given his association with the avant garde, the release of a relatively straightahead standards album this summer might have come as a surprise. Yet *Mesmerism*, recorded with bassist Aaron Diehl and bassist Matt Brewer, makes Sorey's "unwavering love and appreciation" of the material clear. Sorey had little interest in making a hip standards record, full of reharmonisations and clever time signature changes. "Horace Silver doesn't need me to make him hip. His music is already hip as it is," he reasons. "So let's play the music as it should be played, but take a new type of sensibility to it, that has to do with where we're living now."

To keep things fresh and surprising, he deliberately chose not to spend a lot of time discussing or rehearsing the music. "I wanted do it in a way that was full of risks." The influence of his compositional approach is all over these highly sophisticated and sensitive performances, most notably on Paul Motian's "From Time To Time", where the melody is, in Sorey's words, "suspended in feeling" over no fixed harmonic centre.

Despite such abstractions, the music remains highly accessible, harking back to Sorey's jazz session days in Newark. "I just did what I thought came natural to me, just as I've done it in Jersey," he remarks. "That's the whole playful element of it, right, where I'm not interested in trying beat the audience over the head. I've done that enough for 20 years, I want to do something else now. I want the audience to be able to relate to what we're doing while we're playing this music."

I'm keen to hear Sorey's thoughts on Motian, a fellow drummer-composer. "He has a way of constructing melody that I had never really heard too many other drummers do before," he says. "He's a melodic percussionist. You can tell why based on the kind of melodies he writes. He was able to translate all of that into his own playing and how that informs his compositional approaches. I just think it's extraordinary."

Does Sorey's own drumming inform his own composition? "It does, in the way that my composition is contrary to what my playing is," he replies. "In drumming changes can be made in a split second. I have to be ready for anything at the drop of a dime. Whereas in my composition, everything takes its time to go about. As an artist, I try to go against my own grain." Sorey has long defied others' expectations of what he should be, but it's this willingness to challenge himself that makes him such a vital artist. □

Tyshawn Sorey's *Mesmerism* is released by Yeros7

Rise Of The Super Musicians

Muhal Richard Abrams

Nicole Mitchell

Val Wilmer (Abrams); Joyce Kim (Mitchell)

After a century of marginalisation through Eurocentric and racist bias **Black composers** in the US have created a new context for creative music through models such as the AACM. By **Paul Steinbeck**

For a very long time, African-American composers struggled to receive recognition, especially for their most innovative work. Scott Joplin's ragtime scores sold well in his lifetime, but his magnum opus, the opera *Treemonisha*, was not staged until 1972, 55 years after he passed away. The compositions of Florence Price are gaining attention only now, nearly a century on, thanks to the work of researchers like Samantha Ege. And Duke Ellington, considered by many to be the best composer in US history, is still waiting for the Pulitzer Prize he was denied in 1965.

Ellington would have been the first Black composer to earn this prestigious honour, and upon learning that the Pulitzer jury had recommended him for the prize, only to have the recommendation rejected by the organisation's board, he remarked wryly, "Fate is being very kind to me; Fate doesn't want me to be too famous too young." The Pulitzer board relented only after his death, giving him a posthumous citation in 1999 – the same award they belatedly offered to Joplin (1976), Thelonious Monk (2006), John Coltrane (2007) and other giants of Black music.

There may be many reasons why timely recognition eluded them, but race was surely a factor. Joplin and Price did not look like the opera and symphony composers of the American popular imagination, and across the Atlantic, the situation was no better – it was not until the 1970s and 80s that African-American classical composers such as Alvin Singleton gained acceptance in Europe. The exclusion of Joplin and Price from classical music was rooted in the belief that the form is essentially European, even though "[classical] music has long [been] multinational and multicultural", as composer George E Lewis observed. Moreover, to classical music's self-appointed guardians, composers like Ellington presented an additional problem. Ellington was a jazz composer, and jazz was not serious music, in the view of classical partisans.

Since the middle of the 19th century, classical music had been defined by the conspicuous absence of improvisation. Virtually every other musical form, in every time and place, included improvisatory moments where the performers spontaneously created music together. But in the classical tradition, improvisation gradually disappeared, and the music was transformed from a performing art to an "imaginary museum", in the words of philosopher Lydia Goehr.

In this imaginary museum, composers were the artists and performers were their instruments, tasked with faithfully playing each note exactly as it appears on the score. Performers' interpretations might differ, but improvising on the score – or setting it aside entirely – would endanger the entire enterprise and was therefore forbidden. From this perspective, jazz represented a thoroughgoing challenge to the classical aesthetic. The best jazz musicians were just as virtuosic as classical performers, but much of their playing was improvised and not reliant on a composer's guidance. And jazz composers seemed less interested in exerting authority over performers and more interested in creating platforms for improvisation.

The collaborative approach to creativity helped make jazz the most inventive and influential music of the first half of the 20th century. But in the US as well as Europe, institutional acclaim eluded composers who hailed from the wrong side of the colour line, or whose music sounded too much like jazz. So in May 1965, the same month that Ellington was denied the Pulitzer Prize, a group of Chicago based African-American composers decided to take the situation into their own hands. They founded the non-profit Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and dedicated it to supporting the creation of new pieces. The Association worked toward this goal in two ways: by presenting concerts of AACM artists' original compositions, and by building a culture in which all the members helped each other to cultivate highly individual styles as composers and performers.

AACM members could investigate any musical form – or create their own – but one genre seemed to be out of favour. "We're not really jazz musicians," co-founder Muhal Richard Abrams announced at the nascent organisation's first meeting, and everyone in attendance could understand why. Many AACM members had played jazz professionally, but by 1965 making a living as a jazz performer was nearly impossible in Chicago. Jazz composers had it even worse, with poor economic prospects and no hope of being taken seriously by the musical establishment. The artists responded by devising their own form, "creative music", that drew inspiration from American and European experimental music – and countless more styles from around the world.

Crucially, the members of the Association did not erase improvisation from the musical language that they were developing together. Instead, AACM musicians combined composition and improvisation in new ways, going beyond the models provided by jazz and by indeterminate experimental music. Additionally, AACM artists continued to perform at the highest level, rather than retreating into the composer's studio.

They became "super musicians", as Roscoe Mitchell put it, able to compose in any style and improvise fluently in every kind of musical setting. Most importantly, the members of the AACM were committed to teaching younger musicians, so that the organisation's rising generations could freely enter into the musical universe that the Association was creating.

The AACM's ambitions were not realised right away. In 1969, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell and five other members moved from Chicago to Paris, where they found that it was incredibly difficult to have their "notated music ever respected or performed". On one occasion, Mitchell was commissioned to compose a piece for a film soundtrack, but the professional musicians in the studio orchestra refused to play his score, so he had to replace them with students from a Paris conservatory.

Decades later, however, Braxton and Mitchell's scores are regularly performed by orchestras and chamber ensembles in Europe and the US, while other senior AACM members – George E Lewis, Nicole Mitchell, Wadada Leo Smith and Henry Threadgill – are among the most celebrated and highly awarded composers on the planet. And their protégés, from AACM artist Tomeka Reid to non-members such as Tyshawn Sorey and the Swiss composer-percussionist Jessie Cox, have already become major figures in 21st century music.

Every contemporary composer-performer, even in the absence of direct ties to the Association, is indebted to AACM members' extraordinary experiments in sound. Nearly 60 years after their founding, the world of music is a lot more like the Association – more innovative, less beholden to outdated models, and more welcoming to Black composers – and for that we can all be grateful. □

Paul Steinbeck's *Sound Experiments: The Music Of The AACM* is published by the University of Chicago Press

Surgery Radio 15

Time Wharp
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Aethiopes (Backwoodz Studioz)
Jeremiah Chiu & Marta Sofia Honer
Recordings From The Åland Islands (International Anthem)
CTM
Babygirl (Posh Isolation)
Plastikman & Chilly Gonzales
Consumed In Key (Secret City)
Pjusk
Salt Og Vind (12k)
Francis Harris
Thresholds (Scissor And Thread)
Mondkopf
Spring Stories (Miasmah)
Jana Horn
Optimism (No Quarter)
caroline
caroline (Rough Trade)
Duncan Marquiss
Wires Turned Sideways In Time (Basin Rock)
Melts
Maelstrom (Mother Sky)
Mai Mai Mai
Rimorso (Maple Death)
William Basinski & Janek Schaefer
"...on reflection" (Temporary Residence Ltd)
Burial
Antidawn (Hyperdub)

Compiled by Eric Hill, Surgery Radio Podcast, surgeryradio.podbean.com

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"Milestone (Live At The Village Vanguard)" (Riverside)
Antonio Carlos Jobim & Elis Regina
"Aguas De Marco" (Philips)
Neutral Milk Hotel
"In The Aeroplane Over The Sea" (Merge)
Rev Gary Davis
"Children Of Zion" (Transatlantic)
Albert Mangelsdorff
Creole Love Call (MPS)
Ken Vandermark & Paal Nilssen-Love
"Flashpoint" (Catalytic Sound)
Bloodcount & Tim Berne
"Loose Ends" (Bandcamp)
Too Many Zooz
"Car Alarm" (Bandcamp)
Charles Mingus
"All The Things You Could Be By Now If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother" (Candid)
Harry Partch
"Ring Around The Moon, A Dance Phantasm For Here And Now Phase 4" (New World)
Henry Brant
"Kingdom Come" (Desto)
3 Mustaphas 3
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Simon H Fell
"Mvt III" (Bruce's Fingers)
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Jack Webb
"Try A Little Tenderness" (Warner Bros)

Compiled by Broo, Jason, Ryan, Shep and Scott, hosts of the *Puget Soundz/Pungent Sounds* radio show, Seattle, US. They can be heard on Mondays from 5-6pm PDT on Seattle's 107.3 KBFG-FM or KBFGSeattle.org/listen

Big Ears 15

Zoh Amba
O, Sun (Tzadik)
Alabaster DePlume
Gold (International Anthem)
Columbia Icefield
Ancient Songs Of Burlap Heroes (Pyroclastic)
Jakob Bro/Arve Henriksen/Jorge Rossy
Uma Elmo (ECM)
Combo Chimbita
Ire (Anti)
Andrew Bird
Inside Problems (Wegawam)
William Parker
Mayan Space Station (AUM Fidelity)
Terry Allen & The Panhandle Mystery Band
Smokin' The Dummy/Bloodlines (Paradise Of Bachelors)
Cécile McLorin Salvant
Ghost Song (Nonesuch)
Pino Palladino & Blake Mills
Notes With Attachments (Verve)
Charlotte Adigéry & Bolis Pupul
Topical Dancer (Bounty & Banana)
Sierra Hull
"25 Trips" (Rounder)
Calexico
El Mirador (Anti)
Amadou & Mariam
La Confusion (Because Music)
Adia Victoria
A Southern Gothic (Atlantic)

Compiled by Tom Welsh, Director of the Big Ears Festival. Big Ears will take place from 30 March–2 April 2023 in Knoxville, US. bigearsfestival.org

The Office Ambience

april the cruelest
hard bop (or how i started hating myself) (Bandcamp)
Calsutmoran
Biomechanoid Butcher Shop (Bandcamp)
Jesca Hoop
Order Of Romance (Memphis Industries)
Ani Klang
Ani Klang (New Scenery)
Klein
Cave In The Wind (Bandcamp)
Larytta
"Drop The Gun" (Larytta/NSK)
Mali Obomsawin
Sweet Tooth (Out Of Your Head)
ONO
Kate Cincinnati (American Dreams)
Oxbow & Peter Brötzmann
An Eternal Reminder Of Not Today/Live At Moers (Trost)
Jeff Parker
Mondays At The Enfield Tennis Academy (Aguirre)
Vanessa Rossetto
The Actress (Erstwhile)
Lewis Taylor
Numb (Slow Reality)
TWEAKS
Older Now (Bandcamp)
RA Washington/Jah Nada
In Search Of Our Father's Gardens (Astral Spirits)
White Boy Scream × Canasta
How It Feels (No label)

Compiled from the playlists of *Wire* staff. To hear a stream of our Office Ambience, go to thewire.co.uk. We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, DJs, venues, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email a top 15 to charts@thewire.co.uk – the more unusual the better.

Got wood: Devin Townsend's big logs (see page 32)

Alana Paterson

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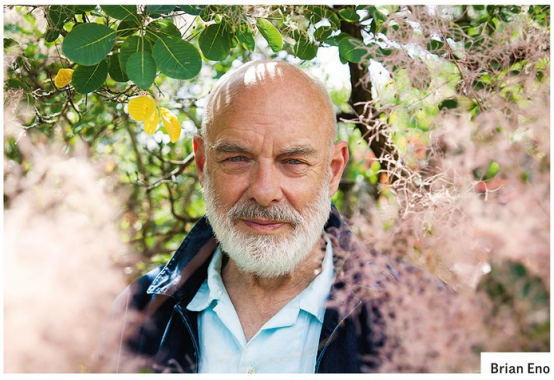
Björk



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33–69
CANVAS DL/LP
Billy Bultheel and Alexander Iezzi's *33-69* is a surprisingly powerful and cohesive debut. Surprisingly, because conceptual artists making music can be a very hit and miss affair, often becoming a mess of amateurism masquerading as experimentation. The 33 duo, though, have both been working in the medium for some time, honing their craft rather than picking it up as a transitory form to be butchered.

There's a bit of butchering taking place on *33–69* but in a far more exciting and immediate way. Nine tracks power through a gauntlet of other interdisciplinary artist-musician cameos, who hammer the album's sonic artillery of high-fidelity industrial noise and gothic trance with a performative violence that's as thrilling as it is camp. Ivan Cheng's alto sighs stalk opener "369", a slow march alongside a lonely violin solo that's intermittently blitzed by extreme distortion. Naked's Agnes Gryczkowska hisses and screeches over the metallic grinding of "The Knife."

If it sounds like I'm throwing a lot of war imagery around, in the case of *33–69*, it isn't overstated. Tracks like the battering "Fireworks" and thumping hard techno standout "Heaven's Blade" live up to their titles. Bultheel is best known for his work composing for Anne Imhof's famously alienating performance installations, while he and Iezzi collaborated on a concert based series examining "queer weaponry" It's no stretch, then, to suggest the album is an exercise in aestheticised violence, which, realistically, is a rather appropriate response to a bewildering age of techno-feudalism and resurgent wars of empire.

Adding a proclaimed Baroque touch to all the chaos, 33 pay particular attention to dynamics with a painterly sense of chiaroscuro. Patrick Belaga's cello squeals and moans through the existential tragedy of "Thomas The Obscure". Opera singer Steve Katona's countertenor lifts the spacious arrangement of strings and organ on "Sexus" into a strikingly delicate sojourn. *33–69* is a skilfully crafted electroacoustic dance album distended with hedonism and high drama, a lavish soundtrack to the brutality, sensualism and stink of this new dark age.
Steph Kretowicz

The Advisory Circle
Full Circle
Ghost Box CD/DL/LP
Belbury Poly
Farmer's Angle
Ghost Box CD/DL/7"
Farmer's Angle by Belbury Poly aka Jim Jupp first emerged in 2005 as the inaugural release on Jupp and Julian House's Ghost Box label. It was decribed in *The Wire* 256 as "light-as-plasticwrap" and "a cross between The Free Design's non-vocal parts and those of 60s music library recordings". The bouncing synthesizer of the title track and the poised disquiet of "Wildspot" set the parameters for a creative investigation that has continued for the last 17 years.

Designed by House, the sleeve of The Advisory Circle's sixth album *Full Circle* depicts a grey and blue collage of brutalist aspiration, martini glasses splashed across municipal quadrants, recalling the uncanny juxtapositions of Sean Hillen's *Irelantis* pictures. Sonically speaking, sole member Cate Brooks has taken a new, heavier direction in order to convey the friction between bare concrete and lavish excess, creating a kind of 1970s retrofuturism that's dappled with the magic of technological progress but shaded with a darkness that hints at its inevitable decline.

Some moments recall the feel of Brooks's earlier releases – as on the title track, whose chiming synths fall into a slow cascade to recall 2005's *Mind How You Go* – but for the most part these pieces are darker and denser than previous work. "Fit For Purpose" combines alarming pulse with shimmering melody, while "The Luxury Spectrum" sounds like it could score an advertisement for the apartments in JG Ballard's *High Rise*.

Held up against the rest of Ghost Box's early output, *Farmer's Angle* is delicate and slight. However, it's also closest to the original brief – the analogue warmth of John Baker and Delia Derbyshire filtered through Pelican book design and the UK sci-fi television of 1970s. Brooks's subsequent work has operated just beyond that aesthetic, and *Full Circle* brings a depth and heft that – along with recent releases such as *Cosmorama* by Portugal's Beautify Junkyards – help to rewrite the Ghost Box brief in new and interesting ways.
Spenser Tomson

Siavash Amini & Eugene Thacker
Songs For Sad Poets
Hallow Ground DL/2×LP
Though Iranian composer Siavash Amini and New York author Eugene Thacker create in different media, their works share a kindred preoccupation with the frail and terrifying relationship between the individual and the uncaring, cold universe. This awareness of cosmic darkness has always been present in Amini's music, including his more intimately scoped pieces. At the same time, Thacker's poetry and writings on pessimism and nihilism presented an explicit investigation into these thoughts. However, in terms of bleakness, none of their previous works matches the harrowing vistas of their collaborative release *Songs For Sad Poets*.

While Thacker's poems exist separate from the music, they are ontologically tied to it and sourced from the same existential despair and melancholy. The eight cuts and poems are devoted to poètes maudits – haunted poets marked by suffering – who serve as loose inspiration on the journey through the album's philosophical concepts. As a result, Thacker's stanzas and lines are sparse and terse, as if meant for a black metal record. His phrases of restless dreams, misery, gloom and vacuum become triggers for deepest emotions. *"Crystalline/Sorrows/Adrift/In ashen night"*, he writes on "Smoldering Stars (For Giacomo Leopardi)", each word laden with enormous weight.

Amini finds a sonic equivalent to this desolation in crevices of industrial, ambient and drone, then conjures a fluid, disconcerting soundscape made of manipulated field recordings, opulent synths, whispering voices, resonant textures and passing gusts of noise. Despite its forbidding nature and sombre themes, this is exquisite music, exemplified by stunning moments like the tense interplay between synthetic chirps and serpentine sirens on "A Quiet Glow (For Chuya Nakahara)". Listen deeply enough and you may just catch a sliver of hope in a blissful synth swell or open-ended progression, if only for a moment.
Antonio Poscic

Suzi Analogue
Infinite Zonez
Disciples DL/LP
Miami based producer, songwriter, composer and performer Suzi Analogue has been making a ton of fascinating music on her own Never Normal imprint, and here UK label Disciples collates and issues productions from her *Zones 1–4* series of mixtapes on a physical format.

Analogue grew up in Baltimore, and made moves to Philadelphia and New York before settling in Miami. Her sound isn't just pan-American (you'll hear plenty of stuff analogous to Miami bass, Baltimore club and even Southern trap) but global, with plenty of motifs that come straight from drum 'n' bass, UK drill and European techno. Crucially, it's a riot.

The energy starts off maniacal and doesn't really let up. "2 Deep" sees Junglepussy lend a typically compelling cameo to a harshly electronic, almost Detroit-dark soundscape of rippling polyrhythms and weird dubby touches. Analogue's attention to detail, even at high bpms (check the dizzying Afrostep/bashment of "She's Gonna" featuring RP Boo) comes across, each track requiring several rewinds to fully wrap your head around all the different detonations and derailments she commandeers. "Best 16" is hiphop played by rebelling robots, the sudden eruption of an "Amen" break pulling all the details into the slipstream, while "Nno Apology" takes a chopped shard of a Michael Millions bar and lets it doomily repeat over hyperkinetic footwork/juke beats.

What I particularly dig here is that this is pure unbridled energy without any sense of false positivity or egoism – the melodies on the mighty "cyberShine Nn Any Weather" are almost exclusively dark, dubby, dank and miasmic, and that thrilling sense of hard-boiledness to Analogue's music really captivates. Highlight "Don't Clock Nn" puts that "Funky Worm"/"Public Enemy No 1" sound in a haunting chamber of lightspeed jungle breaks, and you're hitting repeat and reload immediately because this collection is future and past crushed into a brand new high.
Neil Kulkarni

Badge Époque Ensemble
Clouds Of Joy
Telephone Explosion DL/LP
Listening to this latest set from Toronto based collective Badge Époque Ensemble, I'm caught between two powerful impulses. The first is to irresistibly drown in the cleanliness, the clarity, the multitracked 1970s warmth and lushness in these retro soundtrack/electric jazz reveries. Secondly, to wonder, who have I become to accept such thoroughly dated, deliberately vintage sounds in my life?

As ever with music that tightropes you between delight and disgust, the most profound questions concern motivation, whether BEE sound like this as a refutation of the present, or whether – as I suspect – this is simply what naturally emanated from them at this period of their lives. As with the sonically adjacent new Soyuz opus *Force Of The Wind*, I can't help admiring the chops while also giggling/goggling at the sealed-in cultishness of the music. Robed in white, definitely bearded and with a glassy-eyed smile, *Clouds Of Joy* is distinctly hippyish but strangely compelling for it.

Key to the gorgeousness of tracks like "Conspiring With Nature" and "Let Breath Be The Sum" are Jay Anderson's fluid beats, Alia O'Brien's wonderfully minimal flute and Karen Ng's always engrossing saxophone – this is a highly polished ensemble that instinctively knows to give each other space. "All Same 2 Each, Each Same 2 All" opens up luxuriantly spacy modal structures but soon becomes

Rockin' through the decades: OM

Swiss saxophonist **Urs Leimgruber**'s ever-evolving improv fusion unit OM continue to seethe 50 years after their formation. By **Phil Freeman**

OM
50
Intakt CD/DL

The quartet OM was formed in 1972 by saxophonist Urs Leimgruber, guitarist Christy Doran, bassist Bobby Burri and drummer Fredy Studer. Their initial burst of activity lasted a decade and encompassed four and a half studio albums (the A side of their debut, 1975's *Montreux Live & More*, was the 25 minute "(Füddler) On the Roof"). One of their releases was a collaboration with Brazilian percussionist Dom Um Romão; otherwise, it was always the quartet, self-sufficient and on their own path.

Their first full studio album, 1976's *Kirikuki*, blended fierce saxophone – somewhere between Pharoah Sanders and Joe Farrell – with intricate grooves that took as much from Can as from Weather Report or Miles Davis. Doran's guitar was jagged, approaching James 'Blood' Ulmer or Sonny Sharrock territory at times, Burri's bass was so busy it was a de facto co-lead instrument and Studer's drumming was the perfect middle ground between the pulse time of Rashied Ali and the precise funk of Jaki Liebezeit. In some ways, the music prefigured the no wave skronk fusion that would emerge from New York's lofts in the latter part of the decade, but at its prettiest it could sit comfortably alongside the more adventurous discs in the CTI catalogue.

That was followed by three more studio albums – 1977's *Rautionaha*; the aforementioned 1978 collaboration with Brazilian percussionist Dom Um Romão that added twang, vocals and a gentle airiness to their groove; and 1980's *Cerberus*. Toward the end, they had settled down a little, but could still muster almost Mahavishnu Orchestra levels of speed and fluidity when they felt like it. The final track from *Cerberus*, "Eigentlich Wollte Johann Auf Dem Mond Den Andern Jazz Kennenlernen", marked the only other time a guest – in this case, accordionist Erdman Birke – was permitted to join them in the studio. In 1982, they disbanded, and the various members moved on to other projects.

In 2008, though, OM reunited at the Jazzfestival Willisau. Listening to the performance, an hour of improvisation broken into 12 parts and released in 2010, it's hard to believe it's the same group. In many ways, of course, it wasn't; it was just the same four people. This version of OM was much more abstract, having seemingly absorbed the lessons of non-idiomatic European avant garde improvisation in their 25 years away. It also incorporated theatricality: the performance began with three minutes of dadaist vocal eruptions from all four men, muttering and yelping in various languages.

It took them another decade to come back again. In 2020, they released *It's About Time*, a stark and subdued album that owes more to modern classical and the provocations of groups like AMM than the free jazz, funk and fusion of their first decade. Same four people, same name, entirely different group.

Now, two years later, they have released what must certainly be their final statement as a quartet, as Fredy Studer died on 22 August of this year. Just as *Willisau* and *It's About Time* were very different from each other and from everything OM did in their first decade, *50* is very different from its immediate predecessor. This is a harsh and forbidding album from its first notes. The nearly 11 minute opener "P-M-F/B" has the junkyard rattle and boom, and ominous low end, of Tom Waits's 1992 masterpiece *Bone Machine*. The album is mixed by Roli Mosimann, well known for his work with Swans, JG Thirlwell, The Young Gods and other similarly wrathful acts, and he gives it a noisy, ear-scraping feel; Doran's guitar is as harsh as Studer's cymbals, and Leimgruber's saxophones squawk like angry geese. The reeds player begins "A Frog Jumps In" with a passage of extended technique – if that term is accurate for half a minute of disgusting sucking and slurping noises. He transitions into clacking his valves and making duck call-like sounds as Doran strums jazz guitar-like crescendos and Burri bows an upright bass in a way that makes it sound like the groaning of a wooden ship's hold. At 12 minutes, the piece is too long, especially considering that the slurping noises become choking and gagging noises later, but there are compelling moments throughout, and the suspense of waiting for the next one is real.

The album returns to more structured pieces in its second half. "Diamonds On White Fields" sounds like early 70s Miles, halfway between "Yesternow" from *A Tribute To Jack Johnson* and the quieter passages of *On The Corner*, with Burri playing an impossibly deep, dubby part as Studer clacks his snare's rim and Doran and Leimgruber take turns up front, squealing and pinging. In the piece's final few minutes, guitarist and bassist launch into a riff that's the best kind of disgusting; you will grimace, and you may even throw a fist in the air. "Im Unterholz Bei Kiew" is more abstract, but still has the forward momentum that "A Frog Jumps In" lacked, and the closer, "Behind The Eye", is almost krautrock (albeit more Amon Düül II than Neu!). 50 years is a hell of a run, and if OM's first act was more immediately appealing than their second, they're still going out strong. ☐

Max Kellenberger

a deliciously gamey slice of Caravan/Man-style limber jazz funk – the vocals from Dorothea Paas and James Bailey are exquisite, double tracked into a lushness worthy of The Roches or Rotary Connection.

As the album progresses I found myself unable to resist its textural charms even if I find the textual substance unmoving. I love the sheer thumping sass of "Soviet Zodiac", the *Aja*-like wankery of "Badge Epoque Ensemble" (yes, they name a track after themselves), and the miraculous "Don't Touch A Hair On His Head" – a track so beautifully measured and appointed you keep expecting Minnie Ripperton to come in and drop a verse.

At first *Clouds Of Joy* was a supremely guilty pleasure. The longer I spend with it, the more that guilt melts away into sheer liquid bliss.

Neil Kulkarni

Björk
Fossora
One Little Independent CD/DL/2×LP

Björk's tenth solo album is inspired by mushrooms. And although I hadn't really thought about this before spending time with *Fossora*, I feel like I now know with certainty what the subterranean fungal realm sounds like; bubbling organic woodwinds, the parping of bass clarinets, strangely intelligent sampled phonemes, earth pounding gabber beats.

It's a theme that affords the project its oddly charming, goblincore aesthetic, one that capitalises on Björk's unique strengths: the arrangements on *Fossora* are among the most complex and lavish of her career; heart-bursting melodies hung loose over shifting metres and volatile programming. The mycelial universe serves as a poetic metaphor for discussing the sensuality and intelligence of the natural world, existential entanglements and ancestral roots, cycles of decomposition and nourishment, loss, survival and rapture.

"Atopos" sets the tone by bashing the doors off, a sextet of bass clarinets bounces around a stiff reggaeton beat that builds to a punishing barrage courtesy of Balinese production duo Gabber Modus Operandi, while Björk sings earnestly about cancel culture (*"To insist on absolute justice at all time/It blocks connection"*). The centre of the album is held by pair of remarkable compositions dedicated to her late mother, environmental activist Hildur Rúna Hauksdóttir. The vocal writing is exquisite on "Sorrowful Soil", a eulogy sung by choral voices entwined, at first haltingly, then emphatically reassuring *"You did well/You did your best"*. The gut punch arrives with "Ancestress", Bjork's *"matrimort"* epitaph, a series of narrated verses from a deathbed scene. Sindri Eldon Þórsson's voice joins forces with his mother's, together pushing the melody uphill, with gamelan bells, gongs and strings surging and receding behind.

But the album doesn't linger very long in grief. "Allow" is ecstatic, recalling the weightless flute textures of 2017's *Utopia*. The title track mashes clarinets and oboes against the brute sounds of gabber, pushing the clipped intensity towards extreme delirium. The finale "Her Mother's House" is a moving duet between mother and daughter, Doa (Ísadóra Bjarkardóttir Barney). Cascading voices embrace, caress and mirror one another. The song concerns a mother letting a child go, the generosity that allows a young woman's heart to grow the capacity for *"matriarchal architecture"*. Profoundly moving and grounded, cozy, cute and extreme.

Leah Kardos

Mykki Blanco
Stay Close To Music
Transgressive CD/DL/LP/MC

On the cover of Mykki Blanco's third album, the singer/rapper/producer appears as a grunge angel, hovering with delight over a collaged bedroom, busy with art, records, pets and a matching angel boyfriend. It's an aesthetic nod to Blanco's origins in riot grrl and DIY punk scenes, but also a reflection of the almost teenage playfulness and freedom of the songs. Its idiosyncratic mix of genres reflects the giddy liberation of self – a maximalist approach to life and art.

The mood is celebratory and communal, from the percussive sunshiny opener "Pink Diamond Bezel" (*"You look so rude in a crop top, boo"*) to the trap of "Ketamine" which punctuates its night time sound with bright synths and flutes. The breezy prog-inflected "You Will Find It" and the emotive "Your Love Was A Gift" – featuring a standout guest performance from Diana Gordon – are paeans to growth and self-acceptance. Light licks all the album's hardest edges, like the aggressive flexes of "Lucky" which transmorph into spacious pop hooks.

The album's myriad guest stars are exemplary of Blanco's reach and taste. On the blissful single "French Lessons", Blanco's light, gossipy verses (*"Told the girls about my man… he says I'm looking like a snack"*) are bolstered by Kelsey Lu's classical gravitas – and on the album version, by the unmistakable voice of Anohni, whom it's fun to hear on some lighter material than usual. Former REM frontman Michael Stipe joins for the retro electro track "Family Ties", both a cosign from an elder and a situating of Stipe within the ongoing trajectory of queer art.

Fellow Black transfeminine artist Ah-Mer-Ah-Su adds a Nina Simone-esque chorus to "Your Feminism Is Not My Feminism", a languid, deconstructed slow jam filled with echoey sax and guitar licks. There's no arguing with the song's intersectional message, but the didactic framing of it is a little trite. Minor missteps aside, *Stay Close To Music* is a fun, joyous listen from an artist who cultivates an atmosphere of warm company.

Claire Biddles

The Bug
Absent Riddim
Pressure DL

For all of the brilliant roots, ska and dancehall vocalists the island has produced, in Jamaica the riddim is still king. In the introduction of her book *Rude Citizenship: Jamaican Popular Music, Copyright And The Reverberations Of Colonial Power*, DJ and media scholar Larisa Kingston Mann describes Jamaican riddims as "a pre-existing instrumental recording which may have been in continual circulation for the last 20 years in popular culture". These are repeatedly revoiced by new vocalists who bring fresh lyrics, melodies and concepts to popular tracks. It is this prioritising of reuse and familiarity that allows riddims to serve as a living musical connection between Jamaica's past, its communal present and the vocal innovations that will shape its future.

For *Absent Riddim*, Belgium based UK producer Kevin Martin aka The Bug puts his own spin on the concept, recruiting more than a dozen vocalists to perform over 17 different versions of the same riddim throughout the course of the album. *Absent Riddim* opens with "Satan", a haunting tune voiced by Nazamba, the Jamaican dub poet who passed away earlier this summer. As the entire track's low end is filtered out, Nazamba's creaky, ghostly voice floats atop the music with the chilling refrain, *"As I look down in the depths of hell/Where wickedness and badman dwell/I See them fighting and casting spell/But dey no I soul nah sell"*. When the bass enters, the track's full power is felt, the riddim that The Bug employs is heavy, slow and unrelenting.

"Shamed" features frequent Martin collaborator Justin Broadrick (Godflesh/Jesu). Here the riddim moves in lockstep as Broadrick's vocal cries are trailed by fierce sheets of distortion that cut through like a knife. In a stark contrast to this fury and harshness, "Puppy" features HTRK's Jonnine Standish, who provides a softer, understated vocal over a dubbed-out version of the beat.

Throughout *Absent Riddim* artists like Moor Mother, Nosaj, Fatboi Sharif, Jaimie Branch, Mark Stewart and more show up to voice Martin's constantly shifting track. The fact that the music here is based on the same riddim yet still manages to traverse the stylistic lines between dancehall, hiphop, noise and dub is not only a testament to Martin's skill as a producer but the elasticity and adaptabilty of the concept.

John Morrison

Cindytalk
Subterminal
False Walls CD/DL

Originating as an industrial/goth group in the 1980s, Cindytalk is now largely the solo project of Scottish artist Cindy Sharp, an outlet for intensive explorations of disintegrating sound, most notably on a sequence of releases via Editions Mego starting in 2009. *Subterminal* follows last year's *Of Ghosts And Buildings*, and presents a more subdued parallel of its electronic textures, arranged in a narrative of four longform pieces.

The album has a somewhat underwhelming start with "See Seer Seek", an 11 minute meander through a rain-soaked sound environment. There is some development of the track's crunching, popping and banging, but it all feels a little obvious. Much more intriguing is "Where Everything Sparkles And Shines", a science fiction landscape of glittering synths and ominous bass rumbles, layered in unpredictable patterns. Initially dense, it gives way to something more sparse and uncomfortable, where only the more extreme edges of sound remain – searingly high-pitched electronics with ghostly echoes and an alien approximation of bass notes on a piano.

"Systems Are Spiralling" is a return to more predictable territory. Based around a three note half-melody, looping in concurrent circles with sugary synth swirls, it's both an extremely literal interpretation of the titular concept and reminiscent of the tackier end of new age music. Thunderstorm sounds – familiar signifiers of darkness from dozens of prior ambient recordings – are a somewhat on the nose addition to the track, but it's intriguing to hear what sounds like a warped recording of vocals somewhere in the mix.

Closing track "We Fly Away With The Birds" is a harsh, raw progression of electronic drama, almost totally ruined by the overlay of birdsong – surely the most hackneyed of all field recording tropes. For all Sharp's pedigree and ongoing potential with radical electronic sound, it's disappointing to hear an album so bogged down with the ordinary.

Claire Biddles

William Fowler Collins
Hallucinating Loss
Western Noir DL/LP

Earth's Dylan Carlson created a new sonic mythology for the abandoned and dilapidated American West with albums such as 2005's *Hex: Or Printing In The Infernal Method* and 2008's *The Bees Made Honey In The Lion's Skull*. Carlson took Cormac McCarthy's novels and soundtracked them with suggestive and slothful guitar figures, inspiring a wave of lonely riders on the dusty path including Jon Porras and Evan Caminiti aka Barn Owl and Neurosis vocalist/guitarist Steve von Till's solo project Harvestman.

New Mexico based composer and musician William Fowler Collins operates in similar territory, but his work is grounded in modern composition and field recordings. He has been a torchbearer of the American gothic tradition, his 2008 album *Western Violence & Brief Sensuality* taking a similarly cinematic approach to

Carlson's, with ambient drones evoking a vast and forlorn landscape.

Swiss American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross described the oft-cited five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Collins's latest record *Hallucinating Loss* explores this process via six tracks that range from contemplative drift to ambient metal. Powerful guitar drones provide a steady driving force throughout the album, though Collins employs a broad range of instruments, including cello, violin and harmonium.

The monumental "Death Acquires A Different Meaning" features vocals courtesy of American-Korean musician, writer and astrologer Johanna Hedva. Her chants range from celestial to abyssal, simultaneously uplifting and suffocating. The heavier passages on the album are reminiscent of Asva, the drone metal project of former Burning Witch bassist G Stuart Dahlquist – particularly 2008's *What You Don't Know Is Frontier*, composed as an exploration of grief for Dahlquist's departed brother. Ultimately however, *Hallucinating Loss* stands on its own merits as one of Collins's richest, heaviest and most cathartic records in some time.

Miloš Hroch

Lucrecia Dalt
¡Ay!
RVNG Intl CD/DL/LP

For her eighth solo album, Lucrecia Dalt revisits her Colombian roots and sings in Spanish for the first time since 2013's *Syzygy*. *¡Ay!* makes use of instrumental textures and musical elements drawn from traditional Latin American forms – bolero, salsa, merengue and mambo – in a set of charming songs, decoratively framed in retrofuturistic sonic detail.

The vintage sci-fi vibe is summoned with eccentric, wobbly oscillations drenched in twangy spring reverb, hitting a sweet spot somewhere between Louis and Bebe Barron's *Forbidden Planet* score and Joe Meek's *I Hear A New World*. The electronic elements are balanced by lush instrumental textures – Edith Steyer on flute and clarinet, Lina Allemano on trumpet, Alex Lázaro on percussion, Nick Dunston and Isabel Rößler on double bass. Dalt's voice is the main attraction, effortlessly cool from Nara Leão-esque cabaret croon and sultry spoken word to the more unsettling vocal modulations and flutter effects that infiltrate as the album progresses.

"No Tiempo" opens with a sedate rhythmic clip-clop of percussion and pizzicato smothered in shimmering organ, elevated by arching flute and horn figures. Dalt's recent run of spooky soundtrack projects have sharpened her claws for "El Galatzó", a razor groove embedded with metallic clangs and shards of Bernard Herrmann strings. Dalt's spoken vocal is sexy and dangerous. "Dicen" showcases more sound design cleverness – splodgy synths and splattery echoes, oompah rhythms, trumpet solos and breathy vocals that create an atmosphere of vibrant whimsy. By the mid-point the adagio dance rhythms start to feel slightly exhausted, though things pick up again with "Gena", a sultry, sort of sci-fi merengue dub, and the slinky strut of "Bochinche".

It's the confidence and clarity of Dalt's vision that makes this album a charming, compelling listen. In its best moments, it's strange and familiar at once, like a weird, beautiful dream.

Leah Kardos

Dez Dare
Ulysses Trash
CHIMP CD/DL

Starting out in the early 1990s with spiky grunge outfit Warped, Australian musician Darren Smallman went on to work alongside Simon Baird in Thee Vinyl Creatures, The Sound Platform and The Wells Collective, furthering the Geelong music scene that had coalesced around punk band Bored! in the previous decade. The pair ceased their musical collaboration in 2006 to concentrate on Low Transit Industries, a label which released relative locals such as Melbourne's New Estate alongside stuff

Signal booster: Trevor Mathison

Aniruddha Das

Trevor Mathison
From Signal To Decay: Vol 2
purge.xxx LP

It seems remarkable that *Vol 1* of *From Signal To Decay*, hosted by Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art in London, constitutes Trevor Mathison's first solo exhibition to date. Sound designer for the Black Audio Film Collective for over 30 years, creating startling soundtracks for unforgettable films like *Signs Of Empire*, *Handsworth Songs* and *The Last Angel Of History*, Mathison has forged the kind of evanescent sonic identity that deliberately and dissidently slips under mainstream cultural radars, but whose imprimatur, when first heard, resonates so incredibly deeply you can't believe more of us, especially us BAME folk, aren't armed with it, don't carry it like a weapon against our own marginalisation.

Fascinated by dub, tape music, musique concrète, industrial music and the myriad connections therein, Mathison takes samples, found sounds and archival material and blends them into stunning reconfigurations of Black sonic space. The second volume of the *From Signal To Decay* project arrives in the form of a vinyl record, released via purge.xxx, that collates work from the past three decades and thus provides the perfect opportunity to either catch up with, or be reminded of Mathison's unique mapping out of the interstices between the hardcore continuum, experimental practice and the between-worlds identities of his music's focus and protagonists.

Opener "James" proceeds from what sounds like a vocal from DJ Melodie's trance classic "Sound Of My Dreams". What happens to that vocal sample is the story of the track, and Mathison's granular pulling apart and rerendering lends it political and personal power – all the longings inherent in the opening vocal phrase take on different aspects and contexts through ten minutes of grinding frictive body beats and flickering rumbling dub. Phrases such as *"I wanna run"*, *"I wanna go to the moment"* and *"Sound is something that is reminding me"* – which in the context of the original track are intended as escapist fantasy – are here given new mutated resonances thanks to the buried mumbles and yearnings Mathison sets against it, the beat lattice plateauing out to a strange vantage point of both internal and external desolation.

"Rendered" takes a thrum of bhangra-style dholak drums and makes no attempt to straighten out their 16-beat polyrhythmic intensity. Rather, Mathison lets them flow into hypnosis, tiny crepuscular elements steadily getting twisted into the mix before you're free of 4/4 time, free of verse-chorus and finally free of any sense of linearity in the track.

"Virus Dub" is like a long lost AR Kane pearl of wonder, again the sense of linear time absconding, the feeling that this is a space to wander in limitlessly, and that every time you hear it, a different set of infinite refractions will draw you in and gently push you out. "Breathe" is pure gaseous wonder, redolent of Stars Of The Lid, Flying Saucer Attack or Burial at his grainiest, a part falsetto, part muezzin voice stepping through the mist and disappearing in the foggy footfall ahead of you. It's magical.

The next three tracks – "Dub & Bass", "First Night" and "Grenada" – seem to form a suite of true triphop, the hiphop dynamics and beats shot through with jazzy abstraction and psychedelic dub manipulation like a trio of great lost New Kingdom/Wordsound instrumentals. Closer "Near Earth" cuts any umbilicus with known physics, and finds a connection between quantum spontaneity and cosmic chaos that's moving and dazzling, bubbling whorls of synth and decayed signals swirling together through the track's tiny afforded aperture to the stellar universe.

For anyone who knows Mathison's work, this is a long overdue collection to savour. For those only stumbling across his music now, be prepared to find the work of an unheralded pioneer who has provided one of the surest, most fascinating explorations of a uniquely British, uniquely polyglot history of sonic intrigue and resistance.

Neil Kulkarni

from further afield, like Washington DC's Lilys and Fonda 500 from Hull, England.

What these bands had in common was a particular fuzz and freneticism that, having ended the label in 2010 and relocated to the UK, Smallman carries into his more recent work as Dez Dare. *Ulysses Trash* sharpens and tightens the already lean riffage of 2021's *Hairline Ego Trip*. Opener "They Scream, My Head Is So Full I Can't Dream" bristles with a rip-roaring gusto that recalls Geelong bands such as Powder Monkey or Smallman's own output with Warped, but delivered with a disaffected sneer that somehow feels more English.

While the opening tracks are hurtling blasts of protest garage, the latter expand into Hawkwind-like crescendos, though still delivered with a kind of disconnected angst – like Smallman is shouting through a half-open window. This sense of distance keeps the thick riffs front and centre, ensuring that the prickly anger of the words never spills into full rage.

This balance – between big and small, between composure and fury – is what makes the record so engaging, Smallman's gaze of disdain flitting from universal issue to idiosyncratic bugbear without pause. On "Tyrannosaurus Shake" he spits lines about obnoxiously tight handshakes, moving immediately to "Bloody Sea, Holy Fuck" which seethes over ocean pollution. Where the emotive weight could easily be lost within the tumult of post-Geelong guitars, here it is high and bold, registering with intimacy and wit.

Spenser Tomson

Dungen

En Är För Mycket Och Tusen Aldrig Nog

Mexican Summer CD/DL/LP

Dungen is the long-running proggy psych outfit led by Swedish musician Gustav Ejstes, and *En Är För Mycket Och Tusen Aldrig Nog* is their first studio album since 2015's *Allas Sak*. It's less heavy than 2004's *Ta Det Lugnt* or 2016's *Häxan* – here, space is left between the layers so that light pours through and glints off each sonic surface. Rather than concocting rich strata from the guitar of Reine Fiske or Johan Holmegard's percussion, these pieces are mainly stripped back and sprightly, propelled by the dazzling vocals of Ejstes.

"Skoevde" reels around a melody that's folky and upbeat, while "Klockan Slår Den Är Mycket Nu" threads melancholic vocals between clockwork percussion. Despite the album's delicate feel, the band find moments that are muscular and hefty. "Nattens Sista Strimma Ljus" is full of rolling guitar squall and while there are still obvious threads back to progressive rock – "Var Har Du Varit?", for example, recalls the jazzy midsections of Yes – tracks such as "Om Det Finns Naagot Som Du Vill Fråga Mig" feel closer to the neon stomp of Super Furry Animals circa *Radiator*.

With these spacier arrangements, the piano takes a more prominent role. While they have based pieces around the instrument before – such as "Ingenting Är Sig Likt" from 2008's *4* – "Höstens Färger" uses it to evoke a kind of angsty melancholia akin to Todd Rundgren's "I Saw The Light".

As the record progresses, what registers initially as a lightness of touch gradually emphasises a subtle jazziness. Where previously these atonal chords and odd tempos would have been subsumed into the heavy mixture, they appear here open and light, forming something that's less earthy and far more fantastical, as on "Möbler" whose milky piano and twinkling guitar lines feel almost cosmic. Though this jazziness has always been present in Dungen's music, the delicate production of Mattias Glavå allows it to seep pleasingly throughout.

Spenser Tomson

Enablers

Some Gift

Wrong Speed DL/LP

Enablers are now pretty much exactly two decades in as a band, and vocalist Pete Simonelli's recollection of their origins is evocative enough that he could recite them over his band's sinewy rock atmospherics, as is his wont. A few jobbing bartenders at a San Francisco establishment later to be battered by gentrification hatch plans to set one sudsman's poetry to music; initial, limited plans mushroom, and Enablers become a tenacious, enduring band. Discordant and delicate alike, they have a signature style but no comfortably definable genre, as on *Some Gift*, their seventh full album.

Certainly, you wouldn't call them a jazz group and leave it at that, but their interplay can demonstrate the intuition of one, as on "Beam". Then, a little over halfway through, a more linear, post-Slint bassline makes a brief showing, usurped in turn by some circa 1970s Crazy Horse guitar pyro. "And Other Oddities Of The Brain" works in some guitar tuning that calls to mind the Steely Dan fandom wing of post-hardcore – most notably, the latterly reappraised Karate – and one of *Some Gift*'s many fine instances of lap steel, courtesy of Kevin Thomson. That sound is perfectly weighted to Simonelli, his speaking voice rich as his prose.

The lyricist doesn't need a sparse arrangement to stand out, although sometimes he gets one: "The Stink Of Purity", marked by Sam Ospovat's finely tuned percussion, observes a group of churchgoers: *"Ladies in furs and kneehigh boots/Sluggish men trekking behind, whispering what can only be the solemn language of sport"*.

On "Suburban Death March" and "Year Of The Dog", though, you really get a sense of Simonelli matching his phrasing to the rhythms and why they've flourished as a band – as opposed to a glorified spoken word project – with a passionate audience, if one smaller than they deserve.

Noel Gardner

Brian Eno

FOREVERANDEVERNOMORE

UMC Blu-ray/CD/DL/LP

This is Brian Eno's first solo LP since 2017's *Reflection* and his first project containing mostly sung tracks since 2005's *Another Day On Earth*. It explores the producer's feelings about climate change and humanity's "narrowing, precarious future". In a statement about the project, Eno admits to finally embracing his role as a "feelings-merchant" and suggests that there might be "hope of saving our planet… if we begin to have different feelings about it".

FOREVERANDEVERNOMORE is evocative and restrained, guiding the listener through regret, nihilism and sorrow towards something vaguely hopeful and optimistic. The music is elegiac, beatless and dreamlike. Eno's voice is soothing and clear, resonating through major chord drones, occasionally stacked in digitally assisted harmony. Aesthetically, the album picks up close to where *Another Day On Earth* left off – making use of the granulated effects and shimmering synthetic ambiences heard on tracks like "Going Unconscious" and "Another Day On Earth" (minus the drum loops). These are songs with enveloping atmospheres that dramatise their lyrics with crisping, gasping, blinding, thundering, quietly screaming sound design.

"Who Gives A Thought" begins tender and desolate, musing about the fates of small creatures – short-lived fireflies, nematodes, *"unstudied germs of no commercial worth"*, lumping humanity in with that group atop a dark minor cloud. On "We Let It In" slow exhalations underscore a meditation on *"burning light"* and *"gorgeous flame"*, with a mood of calm surrender. The idea that life's only destiny is to burn is developed further in "Garden Of Stars", where Eno intones prayer-like *"These billion years will end/ They end in me"* over a thickening drone bubbling with dissonant violence.

The last discernible human words on the record (*"In hell to burn"*) occur part way through penultimate anthem "These Small Noises". They're sung by a throng of voices – acoustic and digital, old and new, first in unison, then refracting in spectacular harmonic arrangement. The album ends with the remarkable "Making Gardens Out Of Silence", eight and a half minutes of barely there emergence in which, amid grains of vocal formants scraping and straining, the barest essence of something hopeful seems to materialise.

Leah Kardos

Lori Goldston

High And Low

SofaBurn DL/LP

Lori Goldston is always transforming the sound of her cello. She might give it a folksy twang, like that of a fiddle, or use it to belt out a glowering drone, or let it twist and turn through gritty improvised melodies. The Seattle based artist's solo work and genre-fluid collaborations often showcase her ability to upend assumptions about the instrument, exploring its potential more than its history. On *High And Low* she gives us a capsule introduction to her breadth on the cello, primarily highlighting her captivating solo sound as well as a few recent collaborations with drummers Dan Sasaki and Dave Abramson, and trumpeter Greg Kelley. It's a transfixing snapshot of her work right now, capturing the uninhibited, raw sound she's championed.

The most enticing part of *High And Low* is its range. The album quickly veers from one style to another, creating a winding roadmap that dots the musical places Goldston has travelled during her career. "Cold Air", a stripped down track, features a light, folkloric attitude, drawing on Goldston's interests in old Folkways recordings and folk music studies, while "Aloft" emphasises another side of her instrument, blaring out deep, amplified cello drones like an electric foghorn and taking cues from her work with drone metal band Earth. And collaborative tracks like "Moss On Rock", which features Kelley and Abramson, present pummelling improvisation, blossoming from frenetic drum pulses and blown-out trumpet, with Goldston's explosive cello leading the way.

High And Low situates Goldston in her niche as a cellist who's always looking for new ways to make sound. In embracing possibility, rather than clinging to the instrument's weighty, classical associations, Goldston makes music full of freedom and surprise.

Vanessa Ague

Catherine Graindorge featuring Iggy Pop

The Dictator

Glitterbeat DL/LP

The storied voice of Iggy Pop is a coveted guest presence. Appearing on the work of many artists over the past two decades, Pop's voice can equally evoke rock 'n' roll excess ("Kick It" by Peaches), hysteria ("Aisha" by Death In Vegas) or world-weariness ("Pain" by Danger Mouse and Sparklehorse). On Belgian composer Catherine Graindorge's scuzzily bleak EP *The Dictator*, Pop's presence isn't just a shortcut to aspects of his persona, but a rich and sometimes surprising guide through the darkly inevitable endtimes.

The four tracks here – the result of Graindorge reaching out to Pop after he played her music on his radio show – follow a loose narrative of totalitarianism, apocalypse and extinction. The title track utilises Pop as a keeper of living memory (*"I remember the hysterical speaker at the patriotic assembly… I remember the bloody head, handsome and dead/Of the president"*), foreseeing the coming of an ultimate charismatic leader to surpass all before him. Graindorge's creeping, ominous arrangement of electronics,

Epic soundtracks: Vicente Hansen Atria

Vicente Hansen Atria
Orlando Furioso
Aguirre DL/LP

In *Orlando Furioso*, Ludovico Ariosto's epic poem of 1516, the main character travels to the moon in order to recover his sanity. Amid a vast *"store of sense"* he finds it, *"a thin and subtle liquor"* stored in a flask. This lunar adventure is just one of many intrepid journeys taken throughout the Renaissance epic, with Ariosto attempting to document the various hypothetical musics Orlando could have encountered on his way. In his own *Orlando Furioso*, New York based Chilean composer-drummer Vicente Hansen Atria uses the unlikely inclusion of the science fiction trope of interplanetary travel in a Renaissance epic as a literary equivalent and starting point for his own reimagining and juxtaposition of musical worlds.

The vast abundance of music available to us is both enriching and overwhelming. How can today's composers overcome the burden of influence and remap the territory? Atria's solution, as Mat Muntz writes in the sleevenotes, is to break distinct musical worlds down into component parts and reassemble them into a language. "When completed with precision," he argues, "the listener is deposited somewhere beautiful and strange, left to assign their sensations meanings of their own." In Atria and Muntz's ensemble Vex Collection, this approach results in an "alt. historical" assemblage of traditions from around the world.

With *Orlando Furioso*, his debut as bandleader, Atria creates an otherworldly context for his "alien chamber folk music", combining Latin American traditions with Indonesian and Cajun traditions, 31 note scales from Renaissance music theory, avant garde jazz and djent. Creating a fully integrated musical language from such disparate vocabulary is a remarkable achievement for a young composer. And his collaborators – a crack squad of emerging jazz and new music talent – more than rise to the challenge of realising such ambitious compositions.

The album begins with "En Tornasol", a tribute to the Chilean composer, ethnomusicologist, visual artist and poet Violeta Parra, a pivotal figure in the Nueva Canción movement. The lyrics are drawn from one of her best known songs, "Arriba Quemando El Sol" ("Above The Sun Burns"), a paean to the resilience of northern Chile's rural poor. In the original, the melody is set to a single major chord, which Parra doggedly strums on her guitar. Atria bases his piece on a single hexachord (a six-note series) built from the fourths that open Parra's melody. It retains the original's driving quality, while going through inversions that create a woozy, descending sequence, as if the sun is melting the tape.

Niña Tormenta's multitracked vocals weave in and out of continually shifting sections, her airy tones offset by Alec Goldfarb's harmonically skewed acoustic guitar picking and Andrew Boudreau's harpsichord, an analogue for the 25 string Chilean guitarrón. Bright interjections from David Acevedo's trumpet and David Leon's woodwinds cut across cellist Daniel Hass and bassist Simón Wilson's jagged figures. On drums, Atria's abstracted cueca rhythms underline the piece's Latin American inheritance, before a thundering djent breakdown nods towards contemporary idioms.

The six-part "Raso, Sarga, Tafetán" weaves together a cello theme, uneasy harpsichord, trumpet fanfares and off-beam jazz guitar, with Atria's dynamic, tricky drumming the thread. In the final section, the music freely decelerates, the weary clarinet and detuned guitar blurring realities. Built around a propulsive guitar cycle, "Bootstrap Bernie" gives the musicians the opportunity to flex their improvisational muscles within a tight framework. Steered by Atria's powerful drumming, Leon moves from spiralling clarinet melody to gutsy free saxophone, interspersed with peppery trumpet solos from Acevedo.

Orlando Furioso closes with the solo guitar composition "Anticueca N 6". Retuned to a strange temperament, Goldfarb's nylon-string acoustic evokes traditional Latin American instruments like the guitarrón and cuatrao, while imagining ones that haven't been invented yet: space harps, cosmic gamelan, Venusian banjo. It's the purest distillation of Atria's musical language, simultaneously grounded and unearthly.

Stewart Smith

Nathalie Basoski

strings and feedback matches the crushed perception of Pop's delivery. Theatrical flourishes complicate his wise old sage character – is there a part of him that revels in his position as seer of humanity's tragic future?

The central two-part composition "Mud" is more plainly desolate, but no less affecting. Here Graindorge's decaying soundscapes are reminiscent of Jóhann Jóhannsson's most apocalyptic work, or that of her previous collaborator Warren Ellis. The setting is a mud-drenched dystopian planet – presumably ours, in a relatively near future – occupied by humans journeying to an uncertain destination, a last-ditch attempt at connection. In the first part, Graindorge's words are an expressionistic narration (*"Somewhere a story is being told/And my steps in the mud bring me closer to silence"*), where Pop's answering second part considers the coming end with peaceful resignation (*"We who will die out/Like laughter/Like a sunset"*). The final track "Iggy" is free of words, suggestive of a world after the dying out. The lead voice is a desperate violin line, barely a melody, reaching above the waves of reverb-laden electronics, crying out to be understood.

Claire Biddles

Great Waitress
Back, Before
Splitrec CD/DL

Christoph Erb/Magda Mayas/Gerry Hemingway Trio
Bathing Music
Veto DL/LP

These magical, haunting albums have in common the presence of Magda Mayas on piano. *Back, Before* is the fourth album by her trio Great Waitress, with Monica Brooks (accordion) and Laura Altman (clarinet, feedback). It's a live set from Sydney's Annandale Creative Arts Centre.

"Back" opens with shimmering sounds whose origins are hard to separate – clarinet overlaps with accordion, which in turn possibly overlaps with bowed piano strings. The piece begins gently and elegiacally, its loose episodic structure showcasing Mayas's range of techniques and preparations. Unfolding in an unhurried way, it shows a deep appreciation of the possibilities of musical space. After the halfway point, Altman's affecting clarinet seems to become more prominent as an individual voice, mimicking both human speech and birdsong as sustained tones beat microtonally against each other. Increasing notes of agitation are heard from the tolling lower keyboard, while Brooks's diaphanous accordion, the

group's breathing heart, becomes more distended in its effects. The concluding section is increasingly dynamic.

"Before" is a spikier, more dramatic performance which nonetheless exploits the overlapping approach of "Back", producing gorgeous textural efflorescences. After ten minutes, percussive keyboard and gliding toneless sounds from (I think) clarinet herald a rich tapestry of ambiences. The conclusion focuses on high-pitched sounds and noise, eventually dying away.

Bathing Music is equally magical and evocative. Recorded live at Neubad Luzern, Switzerland, it features Mayas with Christoph Erb on tenor and soprano saxophones and Gerry Hemingway on drums. Like *Back, Before*, it's freely improvised, and exploits space and timbre with acute understanding. But the dynamic level is higher and individual voices more distinct.

The opening "The Surrounding Shore" begins as an eerie dirge, but becomes dynamic and percussive enough to be described as free jazz; the track concludes with some furious interplay. Christoph Erb is a versatile saxophonist. On "Mist That Whispers", for instance, he ranges from slurping and kissing sounds to explosive whistling and taut multiphonics. The two albums encapsulate beautifully contrasting approaches to free improvisation.

Andy Hamilton

Robyn Hitchcock
Shufflemania!
Tiny Ghost CD/DL/LP

The first Robyn Hitchcock album since 2017's self-titled psychedelic rocker and the previous, cover heavy, all-acoustic *The Man Upstairs*, is an extraordinary mix of songs and song-styles, its variousness largely enforced by Covid isolation and by Hitchcock's decision to send demo tapes and files to friends like Johnny Marr, Kimberley Rew and producer/collaborator Brendan Benson to see what they could make of his ideas.

The songs are dealt – or just thrown on the table – by The Shuffle Man, whom Hitchcock describes as the "imp of change, the agent of fortune". He's a version of Melville's Confidence Man, neither God nor the Devil, but an all too human virtuoso of chaos.

Hitchcock insists that *Shufflemania!* is a party record. Parties acquired a whole new transgressive subtext during the lockdown and Hitchcock's unshakeable habit of throwing together improbably unmatchable guests and spiking the punch is at the root of every song here. "The Feathery Serpent God" was inspired by a pre-pandemic visit to Quetzalcoatl's palace in Mexico, but comes over as if DH Lawrence had gone to live in Nashville rather than Taos. It's a youngster's party record. The rhythms and lyrics of "The Shuffle Man" are not a million miles from "Louie Louie", and Hitchcock has said that his entire career from The Soft Boys until now has been the result of arresting development at the age of 15 and choosing never to mature past that.

"Stags are lit by gaslight/Stars are lit by jazz/I wanna have what the Shuffle Man has/Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes". It isn't *Blonde On Blonde* or *John Wesley Harding* – two acknowledged influences, on the decision to go to Nashville, at least – but the sheer energy of association and the adolescent clarity of understanding often yields strikingly subtle results, as on "Socrates In Thin Air" where the agora might be the local mini-market, or the world-weary, faux-languid "The Inner Life Of Scorpio" where the half-spoken lyric is deliciously mismatched with what sounds like a 48-string guitar.

There are, as ever, throwbacks to earlier days, echoes of Soft Boys and Egyptians. "The Raging Muse" snarls along, as if John Lydon had found himself in a honky-tonk, but that's an outlier. More typical of recent work is "Noirer Than Noir", which has a backing track that wouldn't have fazed Jacques Brel. Hitchcock considers these songs to be accidents of conception, sub-personalities that emerge out of the fall of the cards. It's their randomness that perversely gives them their consistency. He's been doing this for 50 years, and his novelist father Raymond was doing it before him. It isn't always grown-up, but there's nothing more mature than embracing immaturity.

Brian Morton

Horse Lords
Comradely Objects
RVNG Intl CD/DL/LP

Comradely Objects takes its name from a book that considers the efforts of Russian Constructivists to revolutionise the relationships between objects and the people using them. Might Horse Lords, a quartet of avant gardists playing in a groove oriented, instrumental rock 'n' roll band, see themselves in those artists who, one century ago, set aside the creation of non-objective art in order to make useful contributions to the emerging Soviet state? Or perhaps, given that this is their fifth album and ninth release over all, their object is more comradely simply because its makers have fine-tuned the mechanics of its design and manufacture?

Andrew Bernstein, Max Eilbacher, Owen Gardner and Sam Haberman certainly had time to get it right. They were scheduled to play the first show in support of their last album, *The Common Task*, in mid-March 2020; no need to guess what happened to that show, or any others they were supposed to play that year. So, the quartet retreated to their Baltimore rehearsal space, where they used their suddenly open schedule to work up new music at their leisure and get it just right.

Horse Lords music has never been untidy, but this LP's seven tracks evince a hyper-focused precision. Even when they flirt with entropy during the last two minutes of "May Brigade", the transition from rhythmic grid to textural layering is immaculately executed. Their rhythms gain added impact from a willingness to leave a good thing alone; instead of introducing elements that work against the grooves, as they sometimes did on *The Common Task*, they drive them home. But the fact that this music was developed without any obligation to take it on the road anytime soon may have led to its makers refining individual sounds, such as the overdriven bass on "Zero Degree Machine or the electronic crust applied to the beats on "Solidarity Avenue".

Besides grooves, the other essential ingredient in Horse Lords' recipe is microtonality. While it's possible to spontaneously layer sounds in just intonation, the brain-tweaking impact of the opening sequence of long synth and saxophone tones on "Law Of Movement" feels very carefully calibrated, and more effective for it.

This may not lead the people to call for *Comradely Objects* rather than Ed Sheeran or (name your preferred chart topper here) but it'll do the job just fine the next time you need some new minimalist jams for a highway drive.

Bill Meyer

Charles Lloyd
Trios: Chapel
Blue Note CD/DL/LP
Trios: Ocean
Blue Note CD/DL/LP
Trios: Sacred Thread
Blue Note CD/DL/LP

Scott Fitzgerald was wrong. So completely and wrongheadedly wrong that the only reason we continue to quote him is to show that he was wrong. Not only is there a second act to American creative lives – for those who survive the crack-ups – it very often defines the entire life. In the case of Charles Lloyd, the curtain has been up on the second act so long the majority of fans don't remember anything before the interval, and those who do are apt to give a misleading version of it.

What's immediately striking about these beautiful trio records, especially when taken, as invited, as a unified trilogy, is how like the younger Lloyd he still sounds, how light and delicate the saxophone playing and silver-wire flute work. There used to be a TV ad, so well made I've forgotten what it was for, showing a spider web in close-up, jewelled with moisture. Then a beak of pliers appears and snips what is, after all, tough metal. That's how Lloyd now sounds and looks: outwardly frail and insubstantial, but with a meditator's centredness and a much travelled quality to the personality.

There are three different groups represented here, but the method somewhat recalls the practice at his former label ECM, of playing solos, duos, trios from a common personnel, the only difference being that each group is kept distinct, with no all-in performance at the end. Nevertheless, the commonality of purpose and sound is more important than the differences. To a degree, the whole project is hijacked by the very first track of *Chapel*, with guitarist Bill Frisell and bassist Thomas Morgan. Billy Strayhorn's "Blood Count" has never received such an insightful or beautiful performance, its thread pulse and subdued vital signs concealing extraordinary power.

Named after the Coates Chapel in San Antonio, where Frisell first played with Charles Lloyd & The Marvels, the drummerless *Chapel Trio* carries echoes of Jimmy Giuffre's great group with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow. Still more so does the trio on *Ocean*, with pianist Gerald Clayton and West Coast guitarist Anthony Wilson, a markedly sombre group except when on "Hagar Of The Inuits" Lloyd reminds us that he came up in the Ornette Coleman generation, and in "Jaramillo Blues" that he lived through and thrived on the rock and R&B explosion. *Sacred Thread* is perhaps the closest to what we would expect late Charles Lloyd to sound like, but Julian Lage's guitar continually rejuvenates the music, while Zakir Hussain's percussion hints at ancient sources and wisdoms.

The received version of Lloyd's career is that after Fillmore scale success, he stepped away from music, only to be dragged back into the spotlight by pianist Michel Petrucciani. Lloyd may have abandoned active jazz performance for a while, but needless to say he was scarcely inactive. He spent much time meditating and hanging out and jamming with The Beach Boys. The model you need to understand the artist Lloyd has become isn't John Coltrane, as many solemnly announced when the run of ECM records began. It's Brian Wilson: that same luminous purity of melodic line, that sense of layering and finely enamelled detail. Not to push the argument too hard, but these records will make you smile.

Brian Morton

Max Loderbauer
Petrichor
Marionette DL/LP

On *Petrichor*, Max Loderbauer travels from rippling, upbeat melodies to deep, gritty tones, forming ever curious, flowing music with his favoured tool, the Buchla synthesizer. There's a sense of light heartedness throughout the music's braided patterns, giving the album a charming, wondrous feeling that colours even its most uncertain moments.

None of this is particularly new territory for Loderbauer, a prolific ambient and IDM collaborator and soloist, but *Petrichor* showcases the buoyant, awe-filled side of his sound. Loderbauer looked to mountain trips for inspiration when making this album, letting the majestic and exploratory aspects of the outdoors drive the contours of his music. This theme comes through heavily throughout *Petrichor*, especially in the ways that Loderbauer

balances his sweeping melodies with sporadic exploration, seesawing between radiant, glowing phrases and surprising, energetic bursts.

At times, this feeling of wonder is cloying, but when he plays directly into a sense of astonishment while maintaining depth, *Petrichor* finds its groove. The album's opener "Grosser Bär" exemplifies this mix of playfulness and lightness, letting serene, long-held tones swirl and wobble around an undulating, repeating rhythm. Peppy tracks like "Kastaneida" similarly find this balance, imbuing each ascending note with bubbly curiosity while remaining grounded by steady pulses. Even in darker moments like "Biscayaa", which branches out from a heartbeat-like rhythm, blossoming and then crashing in shimmers, Loderbauer still finds the mix of darkness and wondrousness that best drives home his vision.

While his music conjures some of the familiar tropes of serene, nature inspired ambient music – distant bird chirps, for instance – he also takes the idea of nature as a cue to explore the Buchla's many capabilities. In the end, his music captures the joy of taking a hike, twisting and turning, uncertain of where the path may lead yet assured it will end up somewhere beautiful.

Vanessa Ague

Luke Schneider Presents Imaginational Anthem Vol XI: Chrome Universal – A Survey Of Modern Pedal Steel

Various

Tompkins Square CD/DL/LP/MC

When BBC Radio 3 invited BJ Cole to do a live studio session, there was a small flurry of protest, mostly dandruffy variations on the theme that pedal steel guitar wasn't a jazz instrument. Cole turned in a brilliant set of improvisations, but also a strong vindication of the pedal steel as an instrument that doesn't have to accompany broken-hearted ballads and cowboy songs, as his astonishing CV would confirm. 30 years on, and with Susan Alcorn (represented here) and Heather Leigh recognised as significant figures in contemporary improvisation, the dispute seems almost Laputan.

Cole is featured prominently on *Chrome Universal*, with "Ely Revisited", a haunting, swirling reminder that country music can invoke cocksfoot and tormentil as well as bluegrass. Interestingly, British player Spencer Cullum's track is also a conjuring of landscape, in his case "An Ode To Dungeness" – not so much a topographical portrait of the cuspate foreland as a tune-up in a pub, with the power station looming in the background. More *National Geographic* is compiler Luke Schneider's "Yosemite", an Ansel Adams photo in sound, quite monochrome in comparison to the other players, but all the more effective for that sharpness of outline.

Barry Walker Jr's "I Will Tread Upon The Lion And The Cobra" isn't an expression of disdain for Sinead O'Connor's 1987 debut album but goes back to Psalm 91 and restores something of the righteous, gospelly edge that pedal steel can bring to a tune. At the opposite extreme, Johnny Lam's "Rainbows Across The Valley" is all glass harmonica effects over birdsong and leaf rustle, while both Alcorn and Maggie Bjorklund provide bluesy twang.

A Nashville face himself, Schneider has done a remarkable job, even-handed, eclectic in the best sense and without special pleading for a sometimes preterite instrument. Most important, he's produced a compilation that is more than the sum of its parts, endlessly listenable.

Brian Morton

Nicole Mitchell & Fabio Paolizzo *Medusae*

Don Giovanni CD/DL

Future tech, ancient myth and reproductive processes commingle in this encounter between musician Nicole Mitchell and software designer Fabio Paolizzo. Mitchell sings wordlessly and plays various flutes; Paolizzo plays nothing, but his Video Interactive VST Orchestra, a camera-equipped software musical instrument, registers and responds to her movements and sounds. As winds-meet-circuits encounters go, this is closer to George Lewis's interactions with his own computer programs than, say, Lawrence Casserley's processing of Evan Parker's saxophones, because the machinery, not the machine's operator, decides how to respond.

But Mitchell's actions are the exclusive source. The origins of certain sounds are hard to escape. VIVO might extend the pitch of her back-of-the-throat gargle on "Memory Of A Violence" both higher and lower than a human voice can go, and then distort it into a porcelain-warped roar, but it does not eradicate its vocal essence. And on "Transformation Of A Simple Life Form", VIVO magnifies her huffing breath like microphone distortion induced by the wind. The system is more successful at undoing Mitchell's woodwinds, splitting long tones into glassy whistles, pixelated lines and harsh surfaces.

The synthetic extensions of Mitchell's gestural playing during the four-part "Perils To Beauty" are so jagged, they're unapproachable. This speaks to one side of another split signal. In Greek mythology, Medusa was Athena's insufficiently faithful servant, who was cursed to become hideous, with writhing snakes for hair and a gaze that turned men to stone. Read with a decoder's eye, perhaps those serpentine locks were actually braids and Medusa's supposed hideousness simply reflected the fear of European men looking upon African womanhood? Add one letter to Medusa and you get medusae, the name given to the sexually mature phase of certain jellyfish, when they are essentially bags of tissue with a mouth at the bottom, gonads in their interiors, and tendrils that'll paralyse anything that gets too close.

Either way, it's a force too terrible to behold, which may in some way relate to the unapologetic abrasiveness of Mitchell's processed sounds.

Bill Meyer

MonoNeon *MonoNeon Farts Live In Memphis!*

MonoNeon DL

For balance, I should note this isn't exactly the MonoNeon live set of my dreams. Something about the ambience feels off, maybe the venue, maybe the same nerves keeping the band fiery. There's a tentative edge to the backing vocals, like they're not quite sure the audience are on side. But it's close enough that such reservations feel mean, and it is by any measure a beautiful performance from a band who mostly click. Tight and loose as required, they essay a set of American bassist Dwayne Thomas Jr's greatest hits from the last four or five years as MonoNeon like the awestruck devotees such a singular talent always deserved.

Claustrophobic original versions are opened up to to a nourishing blast of communal air. Modest love songs like "Hot Cheetos" become warm celebrations of groove. The desperation of "Slipping On Banana Peel (On Capitol Hill)" becomes defiant, almost militant funk. The personal ecstasies of "Women, Water & Weed" and "Fartin' All Ova The World" become utopian celebrations, anthems in search of a nation. Inspired, the band solo like monsters. Portland guitarist Peter Knudsen attacks space like a teenager who just got to crank the volume after years of practising unplugged. Dallas native Kwinton Gray paints vivid cartoon tableaus on his keyboard as if the George Duke assisted Mothers Of Invention of the mid-1970s stayed young long enough to party in 80s Minneapolis.

Both Knudsen and his third guitarist, Atlanta's Xavier Lynn, bring well buffed adamantium flash as vital counterpoint to Thomas's own range of discretely virtuosic and essentially sick stringed noises. Likewise drummer Blaque Dynamite serves as a perfectly unusual anchor, keeping and dancing round time with gleeful abandon, utterly lost in the garish theatrics of MonoNeon's multiverse, bringing enough sense of dramatic occasion to ensure every beat is an absolute stinker.

Richard Stacey

Gloria de Oliveira & Dean Hurley *Oceans Of Time*

Sacred Bones CD/DL/LP

Oceans Of Time begins with lush, melancholic strings shimmering in the distance, oozing melancholy and tugging at the heartstrings. It's a little fuzzy at the edges, quite picturesque but slightly haunted. As the album continues, the balance between radiance and eeriness continues to blossom, branching out into laidback beats and drifting melodies.

The story of the making of the transatlantic collaboration *Oceans Of Time* is a familiar one for our current moment. Composer Dean Hurley and visual artist and musician Gloria de Oliveira made the album without ever meeting, trading ideas from outposts in different countries. Their music cultivates a sense of dreampop nostalgia, drawing from Cocteau Twins-like orchestrations and Lynchian melodrama alike – the latter isn't a surprise, considering Hurley is known for his work with David Lynch. But in spite of its clear reference points, the album is a striking debut from the duo in its delicate balance between wistful and optimistic atmospheres.

Though much of the music exists in a dreamy, just out of reach headspace, its strengths lie in the subtle variations the duo create within all the haze. "Ashore Of The Cosmic Sea", a groovy pop track, takes a left turn from "Im Nebel", an ominous song featuring spoken word and hollowed out strings, while "Hanging Gardens" feels more ambient, leaning into gentle repetitions and gliding vocals. The duo find their flow within these shifts, exploring how a tiny melodic or orchestration change can completely alter their music's atmosphere.

Listening to *Oceans Of Time* often feels like entering the state of mind that occurs right before waking up from a long sleep – a little disorienting yet approaching cognisance. And by the time the album reaches its end with "Further Than The Stars" all the tension of the record is released in a moment of warmth, at last approaching the clarity it's been seeking amid the plumes of reverb.

Vanessa Ague

Pauline Oliveros & James Ilgenfritz *Altamirage*

Infrequent Seams CD/DL/MC

Pauline Oliveros determined to become a composer when she was 16, and carried on working until her death in 2016 at the age of 84. Her vast body of work is the proverbial pachyderm's corpus. Was she a proto-noise blaster? An integrative healer? An acute social critic? A heavy droner? The answer to all questions is "Yes, and…". *Altamirage* draws together music from the very beginning of her career and near the end, centred by her relationship with the musician, composer and improvisor James Ilgenfritz.

Ilgenfritz's work includes new jazz, microtonal improv and an opera based on a William Burroughs novel. He collaborated with Oliveros throughout the last decade of her life, and four of the album's ten tracks are duets between her MIDI accordion and his double bass, which were recorded during that time at the Deep Listening Space in Kingston, New York. These pieces incorporate clashing timbres into cohesive dialogues. Ilgenfritz incorporates contrast into his own playing, bowing bright, ragged harmonics in close proximity to resoundingly hollow

low notes. Their acoustic provenance creates an almost tectonic friction against the electronically frosted pan pipes, organ loops and lurching, reedy chords marshalled by Oliveros's enhanced squeezebox. What makes the music hold together is the conscious striving towards connection that is at the heart of Oliveros's Deep Listening concept, which ensures that even when a piece's component parts clash, they do so in complementary ways.

The rest of the album comprises chamber music that Oliveros composed between 1959–61, which she recommended to Ilgenfritz and he recorded after her death. Listeners acquainted with Oliveros's expansive droneworks with Stuart Dempster and Guy Klucevsek, or the slow motion maelstrom of her polyphonic vocal music with American Voices, might be startled by the bracing textures and broad intervallic leaps of *Outline: For Flute, Percussion, And String Bass*. One supposes that she recognised in Ilgenfritz a musician who could realise its abrupt pacing and dramatic dynamics, as well as meet the music's technical demands, which draw upon the full range of his sonic toolkit.

Ilgenfritz and his accompanists are fully up to the challenge. The five-part *Trio For Trumpet, Accordion, And String Bass* condenses similar material, and makes full use of Nathan Koci's (non-MIDI) accordion as a pocket orchestra, nimbly manipulating masses of sound.
Bill Meyer

Open Mike Eagle
A Tape Called Component System With The Auto Reverse
Auto Reverse DL/LP
"Every album is a collection of pieces of yesterdays", advises Open Mike Eagle on "TDK Scribbled Intro", the second track on his latest cornucopia of pop culture detritus and personal neuroses. After two deeply introspective albums in 2017's melancholy coming of age suite *Brick Body Kids Still Dream* and 2020's difficult, wayward *Anime, Trauma And Divorce*, the Chicago to Los Angeles rapper offers something less intensely thematic.

Mike spends a lot of time surveying his music career up to now, and mixes thoughts on his biography – *"Poor man's Three Stacks"*, he says on first single "I'll Fight You", unfavourably comparing himself to OutKast's Andre 3000 – with bars that feel like declarative statements. *"I like to hide in the quatrain"*, he cleverly notes on "79th And Stony Island".

Prior to *Component System*'s release, there was some online fanfare around "I'll Fight You" being a collaboration with vaunted producer Diamond D (there's also a 2021 pairing with Armand Hammer, "Burner Account"). But the golden age hero opts for decorative arrangements over slammin' boom-bap – think Diamond D & The Psychotic Neurotics' "Sally's Got A One-Track Mind" rather than Brand Nubian's "Punks Jump Up To Get Beat Down". The former style proves a good fit for Mike's voice, which ranges from soft and melodic to strident.

But even as the MC plays with the changes, he can't help but build his observations into something that feels like an epiphany. On "I Retired Then I Changed My Mind" he unburdens himself about unfulfilled mainstream stardom, despite frequent critical acclaim and his short-lived *The New Negroes* series for Comedy Central buoying him. *"I debuted age 30/Did everything good but a year too early/I'm never going wide, it's a side effect/Even with* The New York Times *and the Tiny Desk"*, he observes mordantly.

While perhaps deliberately scattershot, *Component System* has several moments of pleasure. Guests include RAP Ferreira, Aesop Rock and Mike's touring partners Video Dave and Still Rift. The inclusion of a Rhymefest interview snippet feels like homage to Mike's Chi-Town battlegrounds. Then there's "Peak Pandemic Raps" which centres on an eerie beat and finds Mike musing about the pandemic: *"Talking like the year didn't happen/I feel like I should hear it in the rapping/Since we all had unkempt beards and weird interactions"*. The song feels enervated. But sometimes it's good to take a rest.
Mosi Reeves

Jessica Pavone/Lukas Koenig/ Matt Mottel
Spam Likely
577 CD/DL
New York's 577 Records have, in recent years, excelled with almost annoying consistency due to the fantasy league free jazz ensembles gathering under their banner. Many of those ensembles are clear enough in their goals, frequently involving label co-founder Daniel Carter or other luminaries working with seasoned peers or hungry younger improvisors in a workshop or apprenticeship fashion.

Other line-ups are more oblique. Granted, violist, composer and Braxton Septet alum Jessica Pavone working with Brooklyn duo Talibam!'s Matt Mottel isn't entirely off-piste, though neither would the results be predictable. Viennese percussionist Lukas Koenig, with his abrasive, quasi-noise approach to drums and electronics, is not someone I've noticed in their orbit until now. But they've been a functioning trio since 2019 and have released a debut from which I was genuinely unsure what to expect.

"Binge Listen", the first of two roughly 20 minute pieces, is a flock of nervous tics limbering its way into a metronomic workout routine. The listless keys it tosses about are disarmingly funky and falteringly bluesy, while the brittle drums roll like a tinpot seismograph, sounding alarms with mounting frequency and urgency. When that aforementioned routine – bordering on prog/math rock territory – kicks in after such escalation of tension, you might expect a theatrical crescendo. Instead it unwinds a convivial loose-limbed swing snatched from the jaws of a panic attack.

The title track opens more like a constellation whorl in a time-lapsed shudder, flexing its cosmic drone with groaning strings and shimmering cymbals. About two thirds in you notice that it has gradated into a motorik folk groove. In that respect, the pieces have a similar structure, charting a path through protean simmer into a delicate or robust repetition. But in both modes, the potential feels endless and the trio exchange electric.
James Gormley

Horatiu Radulescu
Plasmatic Music Vol 1
Mode CD/DL
Horatiu Radulescu (1942–2008) was a founder of spectral composition, a school dedicated to exploring the deep structure of sounds – for spectralists, a single sound is also a resonant acoustic complex. For Gérard Grisey, another pioneer, spectralism considers sound not as dead objects, but as living objects with a birth, lifetime and death – what Radulescu called "sound plasma".

The Romanian composer pursued his singular vision in relative artistic isolation, though there have been a number of recordings. In his *Plasmatic Music*, individual tones are replaced with a narrow frequency band within which instruments wander. His concept of Spectrum Pulse rethinks rhythm, generating it through interaction of sound spectra in such phenomena as beating patterns. Like Pierre Schaeffer, Radulescu's phenomenological investigation attempts to strip sound of causal and semantic connotations, making it fully acousmatic.

This fourth release in Mode's Radulescu series explores the evolution of the plasmatic approach in his early and middle periods. The three works are performed by clarinettist Sam Dunscombe. *Capricorn's Nostalgic Crickets* (1972) features seven overlaid clarinets, whose drones and twitterings produce a slow-moving ethereal soundscape. On *Small Infinities' Togetherness* (1972) Dunscombe plays folk flutes and sound icon plus synthesis and tape manipulation against an archival recording of Radulescu on pipe organ, synthesizer and electronics (the sound icon is a grand piano with dampers, keys and lid removed, stood on its side and played with special techniques). The effect is industrial,eventful, and compelling.

On the final and longest performance, *Inter Time/Outer Time* (1980–83) – actually two compositions played simultaneously – Dunscombe appears with Rebecca Lane on superimposed clarinets and flutes. As mentioned in the sleevenotes, natural variations of pitch create a seething, boiling sonic mass, a single sonic entity with inner dynamism. Radulescu's work recalls Anthony Braxton in its ambition and futurism, yet he's little known by comparison. This splendid release ought to have wide appeal, and shouldn't be restricted to a spectralist ghetto.
Andy Hamilton

Laila Sakini
Paloma
Modern Love DL/LP
Now on her fourth album since 2020, Laila Sakini has not so much established a creative voice as beguiled listeners by what's left unsaid. Whether working with minimal electronic pop – the wiry dub armatures supporting Lucy Van's spoken word on their joint 2017 EP *Figures*; the potluck palette of bass clarinet, saxophone and samples on 2020's lockdown EP *Strada* – or recalling Delphine Dora's chill reveries and the veils and sighs of Grouper on the piano-centric *Vivienne* and *Into The Traffic, Under The Moonlight*, the Melbourne born, London based musician and producer deals in hints and gaps, teasing narratives from the silence. As Claire Biddles's review of Sakini's pseudonymous 2021 album *Princess Diana Of Wales* (*The Wire* 454) noted, the possibility of parallel lives and multiple timelines is ripe for the imagining.

Taking inspiration from Krzysztof Kieślowski's 1991 film *The Double Life Of Véronique* and the heartfelt awkwardness of school and amateur theatre performances, *Paloma* embraces this theme, albeit in characteristically enigmatic fashion. Opening tracks "Fleur D'Oranger (Rise)" and "The Light That Flickers In The Mirror" reflect quavering recorders, scratchy tremolo violin, halting piano and delay-smudged vocals between an infinity mirror of recurring motifs and off-kilter perspectives. A bittersweet melody is cast adrift among astringent bow sweeps and isolated syllables in "The Missing Page", and the reversed vocals and bleak triphop beats of "That Wave, That Line" recall mid-period Cocteau Twins stumbling home hollow-eyed on a fog-laden morning.

While Kieślowski's film throws an early curveball when one of the title character's incarnations dies onstage midsong, *Paloma* shuns heightened drama. Dominated by ponderous piano chords and an expectantly ticking woodblock, the most identifiably cinematic number here, "Wrong Turn From Julies At 6pm", doggedly outstays its initial mystery. Intrigue returns in the simplicity of closer "Paloma Expressions", whose accumulated layers of recorder waver with the exertion of sustained breath then pause in unison, revealing the space occupied by one musician, one room, many moments.
Abi Bliss

Eryk Salvaggio
Worlding: Sympoietic Mycology
No Type DL/MC
Gamardah Fungus
Metamorphosis
Esc.rec DL/MC
A double manifestation of mushroom music, the first of which is American

High Castle Teleorkestra
The Egg That Never Opened
Art As Catharsis 2×CD/DL/2×LP
Trevor Dunn's Trio-Convulsant
Séances
Pyroclastic CD/DL
Dead Cross
II
Ipecac CD/DL/LP/MC
Titan To Tachyons
Vonals
Tzadik CD/DL
Faxed Head
Exhumed At Birth
Drag City DL/LP

My introduction to Mr Bungle came via their John Zorn produced 1991 debut album, played for me by my Texas punk friends – some of whom smelled like they could have used the bottle of Bungle branded bubble bath that some record shops gave away as a promo item with this release. While I was initially put off by the carnivalesque fussiness of the instrumentation, I was also an adolescent with an extremely scatological sense of humour, and it wasn't long before my mum had to ask me to stop chanting the lyrics to "Squeeze Me Macaroni" while my younger sister was in the car.

Many years later, now an 'adult' living in Seattle, I was given some marijuana edibles that left me with a horrific case of vertigo. For several days, I could barely turn my head, let alone stand up. But I had tickets to see Zorn's Moonchild project (comprising Bungle veterans Mike Patton, Trevor Dunn and Joey Baron), so I forced myself to attend. The music was, of course, made even more intensely visceral by the vertigo. When the onslaught was over, I gingerly left the theatre and asked my partner to call a cab. I made it all the way home, into our building, up the stairs and into my bathroom just in time to release the hot cascade of barf that had been welling up for the past few hours. It was a purgative experience, to say the least.

These two poles – the fussily scatalogical and the vomitously visceral – collide on *II*, the second studio album from hardcore supergroup Dead Cross. Each track on this 35 minute outing from Patton and fellow Bunglist Dave Lombardo (drums) along with Justin Pearson (bass) and Michael Crain (guitar) seethes from every one of its meticulously articulated pores. In a video for the lead single, thrash metal anthem "Reign Of Error", animated avatars of the band members roll up to the US Supreme Court in a yellow school bus, juggling cartoon foetuses and flaying the faces of the six conservative justices who voted to overturn Roe v Wade – a cathartic fantasy made even more surreal by its parallel universe similarity to the real world insurrection at the US Capitol on 6 January 2021. Beneath the rage is a current of survival and persistence in the wake of Crain's cancer diagnosis and Patton's struggle with agoraphobia.

II is part of a spate of new releases featuring musicians who spent formative time in the prog punk clown show that was (and is) Mr Bungle. Another comes from Trevor Dunn's Trio-Convulsant, currently consisting of Dunn on bass, guitarist Mary Halvorson and percussionist Ches Smith. On their third release *Séances* the trio are joined by Folie À Quatre, a quartet comprising Carla Kihlstedt (viola and violin), Oscar Noriega (clarinets), Mariel Roberts (cello) and Anna Webber (flutes).

True to the group's convulsive raison d'être, this collection of songs takes inspiration from the Convulsionnaires of Saint-Médard, an 18th century French religious sect given to spasmodic fits and apocalyptic theology. The music is a swirling mélange of rhythms and melodies that feel simultaneously intuitive and intentional – the through-composition revealing itself in moments when the bass is doubled on flute (as above, so below).

Dunn also lends basswork to *Vonals*, the latest from avant jazz/metal quartet Titan To Tachyons, released on Zorn's Tzadik imprint. Led by experimental guitarist Sally Gates and also including Kenny Grohowski and Matt Hollenberg, Titan To Tachyons harness virtuosity in a manner reminiscent of adjacent bands like Secret Chiefs 3, but with an enticingly organic fluidity that comes off a lot less wanky. On *Vonals*, this translates into (mostly) lengthy tracks in which bouts of angular density are offset by spacious passages where tones and textures are given room to breathe.

If there is a release among this group that could be considered the heir to Mr Bungle's genre-jumping wackiness, it's *The Egg That Never Opened* by High Castle Teleorkestra, who bill themselves as a multi-continental middle-aged dad band making music for "those who have sorely missed" the various bands Teleorkestra members have populated over the past few decades. A concept album based on Philip K Dick's 1976 novel *Radio Free Albemuth*, it's an unhinged excursion into the outer reaches of taste, shamelessly leaping from smooth jazz to ludicrous doo-wop; from dizzying orchestral prog to lobotomised waltzes intercut with shards of menacing sludge. The Bungle connection here is Bär McKinnon, who contributes perplexing woodwind and synth flourishes to an ensemble led by Estradasphere's Tim Smolens and New Orleans guitar freak Chris 'Doc Booger' Bogen. There's also a lot more where this came from, apparently, as one of the release's deluxe options includes more than 40 bonus tracks (in case you want to spend several hours listening to *Joe's Garage* for people who would rather contemplate gnostic theophanies than wet T-shirt contests).

The fifth and final new release from the Bungleverse is a remastered reissue of Faxed Head's 1997 album *Exhumed At Birth* – a brutal and somewhat ridiculous 'desk metal' album featuring Trey Spruance (billed as Neck Head as part of a contrived backstory involving made-up disabilities for all the band members). While this album contains nuggets of genuinely glorious strangeness ("Could Eckankar Help?") and a deeply deranged Leonard Cohen cover ("Teachers"), it also constantly teeters on the edge of self-parody, from the Cookie Monster meets Jim from *Taxi* vocals to the deadpan digi-harpsichord of "House Of Spirits". From certain angles, it seems as though this music is trying to be weirder than it actually is, but from others, that awkwardness is part of its appeal – like a teenager who thinks rhyming *"fuck it"* with *"Chicken McNugget"* is the funniest thing they've ever heard. ☐

Becky DiGiglio

Straight out the Bungle: Dead Cross

New albums from **High Castle Teleorkestra**, **Trio-Convulsant**, **Dead Cross** and **Titan To Tachyons** have their roots in the prog punk clown show that is Mr Bungle. By **Emily Pothast**

multidisciplinary artist and researcher Eryk Salvaggio's *Worlding: Sympoietic Mycology*. The term worlding was coined by the American writer and scholar Donna Haraway to describe the relationships formed between the inhabitants of a shared world. Salvaggio's use of the term concerns the links between human and fungi, his album being an attempt to translate the language of mushrooms via his music.

The record's sleevenotes refer to recent research which suggests mushrooms have their own language "built from voltage spikes sent through the underground rhizomatic network that connects them". Accordingly, opening tracks "Fruiting" and "Phototropic Response" stutter and scratch like faulty electric connectors as they touch and spark, before "Pinning" blooms into urgent cycling buzz like a kind of mossy Giorgio Moroder. While these pieces have a sound that's quite interesting in itself, the idea that they might also contain mushroom messages makes them even more compelling.

Though Ukraine's Gamardah Fungus are mycological in name, it's this term worlding that connects their latest release to Salvaggio's record. *Metamorphosis* was recorded before the recent Russian invasion of Igor Yalivec and Sergio Berry's home country, yet it contains an appropriate sense of abrasive doom and fuzzy foreboding. The album's sleevenotes describe a narrative which mirrors that of Franz Kafka's novella of the same name, the "transformation of a person into an insect, psychological and spiritual regeneration of the personality, interaction with society and with one's inner world".

"First Stage" sets up a bank of subtle simmering electronics which melt and morph in disorientating translucence. As the five tracks progress, there is an increasing sense of dislocation and dread – by the time the album finishes with "Final Stage" the electronic tumult has descended into full chaos, echoing Kafka's description of a man's regression into insect, but also the madness and suffering currently occurring in Ukraine.

While Salvaggio's pieces are concerned with the optimism of worlding and the positive potential of new symbiosis, Gamardah Fungus explore the concept's dark reverse, when the structures break down to expose the barbarism lurking beneath the surface of humanity.

Spenser Tomson

Senyawa + Lawrence English/Aviva Endean/Peter Knight/Helen Svoboda/Joe Talia

The Prey And The Ruler

Room40 CD/DL

Whether leaning into hardcore tinged Indonesian folk or hermetic but gripping metallic drones, the music of Senyawa's Wukir Suryadi and Rully Shabara has always been characterised by a sense of breathtaking immediacy. The roots of that directness can be found in the duo's close collaborative approach in which recorded music is considered an extension of their intense live performances. In this sense *The Prey And The Ruler* finds the duo in an unusual but, judging by the results, stimulating setting.

The material was recorded sporadically in Indonesia during pandemic lockdown, then compiled and produced by Lawrence English. Apart from Shabara's extensive range of singing styles and Suryadi performing on a new batch of DIY instruments – his industrial mutants – the album features remote contributions by musicians Aviva Endean (clarinet/flute), Peter Knight (trumpet/reel-to-reel tapes), Helen Svoboda (double bass), Joe Talia (drums) and English himself (organ/electronics). And while Senyawa's music could never have been tagged as ordinary, *The Prey* is astonishingly strange, its organic and synthetic noises assembled into sublime ambient mutations that teeter between delicate sound art and unnerving dynamism.

The first three cuts unwind gradually, akin to psychogeographical field recordings. Mournful growls are accompanied by hushed trumpet lines, then pushed aside by jangling cymbal rides and a stream of gurgles, guitar-mimicking riffs of unknown origin and grave bass plucks. Here, the mood is as immersive as it is uneasy, but pales in comparison with the transcendent "Memangsa Penguasa (The Prey On Rulers)". This final piece is slow, vividly atmospheric and pushed forward by a narcotic bass frequency that feels like traversing, not just observing, a nocturnal wilderness. A symphony of tape-mangled mantras, pointillistic chimes, expansive bowed strings and metallic harshness springs from it, peaking moments before Shabara's machine gun delivery brings everything to a halt.

Antonio Poscic

Wayne Shorter/Terri Lyne Carrington/Leo Genovese/Esperanza Spalding

Live At The Detroit Jazz Festival

Mack Avenue CD/DL

The Detroit Jazz Festival is a musical gift to the city's residents: all the events are outdoors, admission is free and everything is streamed online. In late summer 2017, a one-off quartet – saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Leo Genovese, bassist and vocalist Esperanza Spalding and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington – came together for a performance that was intended at least in part as a tribute to pianist Geri Allen, who had died just a few months earlier on 27 June.

The 55 minute set includes a version of Allen's "Drummer's Song", from her 1987 album *Open On All Sides In The Middle*; two Shorter pieces, "Someplace Called 'Where'" from 1988's *Joy Ryder* and "Midnight In Carlotta's Hair" from 1995's *High Life*; a new Shorter/Spalding composition "Endangered Species"; and the Maria Rita ballad "Encontros E Despedidas". The players have personal connections to the material. Carrington played on the original recordings of "Someplace" and "Midnight", with Allen also on the former.

A significant portion of the performance is taken up by "Endangered Species". It's nearly 22 minutes long, and strongly reminiscent of the work of Shorter's own regular quartet (pianist Danilo Perez, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Brian Blade). It's highly abstract and intuitive music, shifting constantly at the whim of one bandmember or another, with Shorter taking long solos on the soprano, the horn he has favoured over the tenor for many years at this point. Genovese is a superb partner, a romantic player who provides more countermelodies than anchoring chords; most of the true supporting work is done by Carrington, whose impeccable timing, precise snare strikes and thunderous rumbles around the kit allow her to move the band around like a sheepdog. Spalding's bass playing is thick and solid, but her highly mannered "melody? bah! I am singing jazz now" vocals won't be to every listener's taste.

Still, this is modern jazz performed at a very high level, without ever abandoning conventional notions of beauty. Stage a free, outdoor jazz festival and you never know who's going to show up, so you better give them something they'll like. This performance does that and more.

Phil Freeman

Paul G Smyth/John Wiese

The Outlier

Weekertoft CD/DL

The Outlier continues a string of duets that has seen Irish pianist and Weekertoft label head Paul G Smyth recording with Peter Brötzmann, Evan Parker and the late John Russell. While those collaborations fluctuated in mood and style, they were anchored by fairly traditional free improv aesthetic considerations. It was scintillating music that also made you wonder if Smyth could push his dynamic and inventive piano playing even further if properly challenged. Enter US noise wrangler John Wiese, whose opus encompasses everything from the harshest sonic expressions to delicate, studious electronic abstractions.

While Wiese's previous collaborations with the likes of No Age's Dean Spunt and composer/improvisor C Spencer Yeh were often wildly energetic, his encounter with Smyth is surprisingly controlled and ambient inclined. The single, almost hour long track – recorded live at Dublin's National Concert Hall in 2015 – opens with the two players timidly exploring each other's spaces. Wiese's electronics rustle, hiss and flutter, knitting a gossamer fabric of sound, while Smyth taps and thwacks his prepared piano and plays with its hammers, trying to pave a way through the intensifying electronic mist. These early interactions resemble a free improv routine, but instead of building towards a crescendo, Smyth and Wiese delight in sustained textures, then continue their patient growth.

Scraped and plucked strings, caressed keys and percussive body knocks stand unwavering against waves of static, clusters of tinkling bells and spectral effects reminiscent of Jimmy Peggie's work. Throughout, the music's flow remains profoundly atmospheric, almost oneiric, whether circling down a spiral of whisper-like low frequencies or being thrown around by violent stabs of noise. To finally break this spell, it takes the combined effort of Smyth making his piano sound like a piano in a jolt of violent phrasing and an eruption of applause.

Antonio Poscic

The Soft Pink Truth

Was It Ever Real?

Thrill Jockey CD/DL/MC

Is It Going To Get Any Deeper Than This?

Thrill Jockey CD/DL/2×LP

Disco stormed the charts during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic when, paradoxically, nobody was allowed to step on the dancefloor. One of the explanations may be that fat funk bass, seductive grooves and rich string arrangements conspire to evoke a safe space, one that disco has offered to the Black, Latino-American and queer minorities and more since the 1970s.

Drew Daniel, associate professor of English at John Hopkins University and one-half of the electronic duo Matmos, assembled a virtual disco band from friends and fellow musicians for new music that channels the queer histories of disco and house. As one might expect, it's full of pleasure and loss. The four-track *Was It Ever Real?* EP resembles a collage of club memories, drenched in sweat and intense emotion. Daniel's version of "The Anal Staircase" turns Coil's hauntingly intimate original into a carnivalesque psychedelic parade with saxophone, trombone and trumpet. It's in line with the reinterpretations Daniel recorded to celebrate punk's queer history and address black metal's homophobia for previous The Soft Pink Truth releases.

The ten tracks on *Is It Going To Get Any Deeper Than This?* provide – with occasional turns towards kosmische or lounge music – some of the most pop oriented music Daniel has ever released. "La Joie Devant La Mort", with its weeping strings and seductive French language vocals by Xiu Xiu's Jamie Stewart, paraphrases French philosopher and writer Georges Battaile: *"Once more our steps lead us/Into the forest and into the night/In search/Of joy/Before death"*.

Bataille, who survived the terrors of two World Wars, devoted his work to transgressive pleasure and examined joy practices in the face of death. This album's sophisticatedly blissful disco anthems could easily be considered part of such a practice.

Miloš Hroch

Special Interest
Endure
Rough Trade CD/DL/LP
This New Orleans based quartet have built a reputation for fiercely political, dancefloor ready music. Their decolonisation disco punk is anthemic, eclectic and transformative, stitching together vitriolic energy and seductive grooves in a spirited counterattack on an oppressive system.

Vocalist Alli Logout – whose voice has earned comparisons to Nina Simone – rages about black and queer liberation, while her sloganeering lyrics could become protest chants. *"What happens when there's nothing left to gentrify and genocide is on your side?"* Logout shouted on "Homogenized Milk" from previous album *The Passion Of*, which made it into *The Wire*'s 2020 Rewind list.

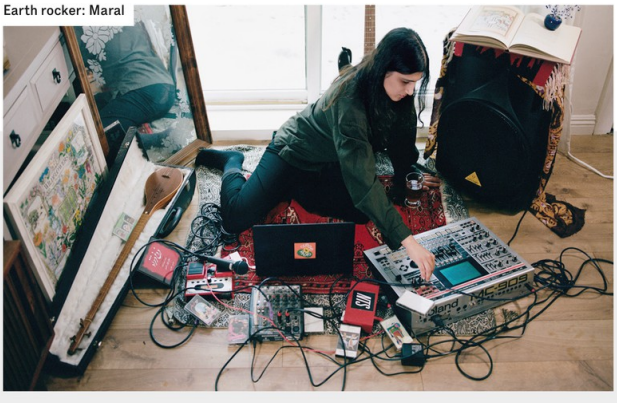
The follow-up *Endure* doesn't lack calls to arms, nor a wry sense of humour. Its title – and the track "(Herman's) House" – is inspired by Black Panther and revolutionary Herman Wallace, who was held in a solitary prison cell in the state penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana for more than 40 years. Wallace was serving a sentence for armed robbery when a correctional officer was stabbed during a riot and was later convicted as one of the Angola Three. Special Interest describe the album as "a battle cry for dreamers who persist in spite of and because" which undoubtedly applies to Wallace, who continued to fight for civil rights while imprisoned.

"(Herman's) House" pairs a slick, seductive groove with the sounds of prison sirens and police whistles. Elsewhere the group spit references to post-colonial philosopher Frantz Fanon and Situationist Guy Debord while channeling radical politics via the legacy of early disco and house, emancipatory genres for queer people and people of colour. Tracks vary in intensity and mood. There are soft, house infused ballads ("Midnight Legend") and jubilant dance punk ala Le Tigre ("Foul") on one side, hard-hitting industrial EBM tracks ("Impulse Control") on the other.

Endure is smoother and glossier than the last album, but it's still music that moves body and mind, inviting dirty dancing between flaming police cars.
Miloš Hroch

Carl Stone
Gall Tones
Unseen Worlds DL
We Jazz Reworks Vol 2
We Jazz DL/LP
Woo Lae Oak, Carl Stone's 1983 debut release, shares its name with a restaurant that offers tasty Korean cuisine. The titles of a number of Stone's pieces from that period reflect his enthusiasm for visiting good Asian eating houses. Fast forward to 2021, when the Californian composer suddenly found himself in a less congenial location, confined to bed for a week in a Tokyo hospital, suffering from a gallstone attack. Despite that physical discomfort Stone managed to lift his spirits by processing, on his laptop, samples garnered from an improbable

Earth rocker: Maral



Maral
Ground Groove
Leaving DL/LP
DJ Maral is an Iranian-American producer based in Los Angeles, known for making earthy, dubbed out sonic excursions that draw from a range of sources including Persian folk and classical, pop, lo-fi rock and noisy, bitcrushed electronica. *Ground Groove* is her third full-length release, some of the material starting life as part of an audiovisual collaboration with the artist Brenna Murphy, originally commissioned for 2021's Rewire Festival. Murphy's art creates hybrid, psychedelic forms that stand somewhere in between the virtual and the physical, and in a similar way Maral's compositions on *Ground Groove* occupy the uncanny hybrid space between cultures, timelines, the personal and the universal.

The signature folk dub style of *Mahur Club* (2019) and *Push* (2020) continues here, enhanced by more prominent performed parts by Maral on vocals, guitar and bass. The sound is psychedelic and elemental; oversaturated rhythms and delay-swamped plunderphones rub up against sharp distortions, ragged jump cuts and mangled guitar tones. The first seven tracks are fascinating constructions of rhythmic psychedelia, short and punchy. As the record progresses, Maral pushes the expressive limits of her assemblage almost to the point of abstraction with a series of connected pieces that hit somewhere between dreamspace sound collage and deconstructed dub.

"Feedback Jam" announces the album with waves of deliciously abrasive distortion. Pounding kicks open up to a swaggering beat, nimble setar melodics and ghostly reversed vocal samples snake in from the edges, saturated and smeared in delays. It's a strikingly original sound, bold and moreish. It's over in a flash, followed by the lazy cool of "Heart Shimmer", a triphop groove set within a squidgy haze of waterlogged melodics. "Avaz-E-Del" quickens the pace with a skittering rock beat set against soaring Persian vocal samples, building to a heady climax of distorted guitar. Once again, just as it feels like it's starting to take off, it's over.

Around the middle of the record, Maral's eccentric assemblage hits its strutting, stuttering heights with "That's Okay, Ruin It", whose rock guitars and distorted overlapping flutes support an almost pained vocal performance from Maral. "Shy Night" (featuring Brenna Murphy) pairs animal sounding guitar tones and spoken vocal recordings with some excellently noisy beatwork, shifting from pop to industrial to something that sounds like it's coming from a gnarly 909 groovebox. This should result in a mess, but the production is so confidently driven that you just want to sit back and admire its audacity.

The music gets dirtier and stranger as the album progresses. "Behind The Rock And Into The Tunnel" is an enjoyably nasty mangle of haunted lo-fi samples arranged in a lurching groove. "Mari's Groove" stretches its legs in the weird zone, jarringly switching up the beat and tempo, as if flicking through radio station presets. Iranian vocal samples surround and situate the disruptions, brute rock guitar and unnamable distortions muscle in on the action. The elements feel intelligent, as though they have personalities of their own and stories to tell, especially on "A Walk And A Talk", the most cinematic track on the record, shifting as it does between moods, atmospheres and conversations, switching between the sonic hallmarks of rock, club, folk, urban and religious music. The album ends with the hybrid ambience of "Glimmer's Kiss", where echo-fried voices jabber over diving bass stabs while a weary sounding flute floats overhead.

Maral plays with the dynamics of repetition and surprise not only rhythmically, but also with rich sonic signification. The production is noisy and beautiful; vivid drum transients, archival sounds that sing across time and space, mind-melting spatials that bloom and bleed over the edges of savage, rough-hewn distortions. Maral is decorating her grids with stories, histories, sounds familiar and alien, delicate and harsh, forcing disparate ideas into co-existence; ideas that you can feel working their way through your body as the grooves take hold.
Leah Kardos

Sam Lee

menu of vernacular musical sources. *Gall Tones* now serves up for our delectation that tangy selection of craftily sliced and spliced dancefloor mutations. The ingredients were chosen with Stone's customary mix of humour and cunning, using finely honed techniques to ensure that each track bears his signature, along with its own distinctive flavour.

In notes for the 2008 reissue of *Woo Lae Oak*, Phill Niblock observed that some of Stone's pieces feel exotic, while others resonate with the familiarity of popular music. Increasingly the immediacy of pop and the alluring otherness of exotica have fused in the intoxicating blend of Stone's confections. The four tracks rustled up so resourcefully from his hospital bed feel simultaneously intense and hallucinatory, stridently delineated and flickeringly strobe-lit. "Sumiya" however was recorded in the studios of Radio Free Nakano after Stone's recovery and fits seamlessly into the playlist.

Helsinki based We Jazz Records launched their series of creative remixes of material from their own catalogue with a selection reworked by Finnish producer Timo Kaukolampi. The second volume has been entrusted to Stone. It's fascinating to hear him working under the constraint of choosing his raw materials from ten albums selected by We Jazz, homing in on sonic profiles, textures, colours and beats for transformation according to his own priorities and preferences. His approach is that of a committed experimentalist with a prankster's inclinations, using blatant artifice to project an authentic voice and an infectious chuckle, taking genuine delight in the whole synthetic process.
Julian Cowley

Sun Ra Arkestra
Living Sky
Omni Sound DL/2×LP
There are likely many factors contributing to Sun Ra Arkestra's return to greatness – a rebirth that those who hadn't travelled into the future likely didn't see coming – but a few stand out as key.

One is the leadership of saxophonist Marshall Allen, who brought discipline back to what had become a rather raucous outfit. More recently, the addition of singer and violinist Tara Middleton has given the ensemble a voice. Off-mic (and sometimes off-pitch) chorales were certainly one part of the band under Ra's leadership, but Middleton more than ably occupies a space once occupied by the great June Tyson, which seals the sci-fi sermons as bona fide songs. The third is pianist and organist Farid Barron, a fairly in the pocket player who knows how (and when) to call back to the old Fletcher Henderson days that were such a staple of Ra's music.

2020's *Swirling* was The Arkestra's first studio album in more than 20 years, and the first chance many had to hear what a fantastic jazz band they'd become again. The follow-up comes in true Ra fashion by changing the formula – longer cuts, six tracks of six to 12 minute duration, with no songs (though there's still some endearing off-mic singing). Middleton is still in the mix, but sticks to violin and flute. Instead, Allen's unmistakable saxophone claims the attention, and his remarkable, abrupt outbursts sound fantastic against well-rehearsed accompaniment.

The album opens with a gentle and reasonably third stream reworking of a Chopin theme (a favorite of Ra's) over which Allen lays elongated phrases and fast karate chops. Heavier ensemble playing and multiple soloing perhaps ironically titled "Marshall's Groove". The album closes with another Ra favourite, Leigh Harline's "Wish Upon a Star" (from Disney's *Pinocchio*) positively bleated by Allen over orchestral swells enough to melt your heart.

The album is warm and lush, mixed and engineered by David Darlington, who has worked with Eddie Pamieri and Wayne Shorter. It's a different side of The Arkestra in a convincing, throwback fashion – to a time when new jazz albums came fast and each was an event.
Kurt Gottschalk

Lewis Taylor
Numb
Slow Reality CD/DL
In the mid-1990s when the so-called neo-soul movement began in the US, innovative artists such as D'Angelo and Erykah Badu were heralded as the best among the new jacks mining old soul and pop to create fresh sounds. However, America didn't have a monopoly on young creatives exploring the depths of musical Blackness, even if the interpreter was another skin colour.

Two favourites from that period were Jamiroquai and multi-instrumentalist Lewis Taylor, whose self-titled solo album on Island Records was cutting edge and underappreciated. From the moody guitars and Joe Meek samples of opening track (and single) "Lucky", it was obvious that Taylor wasn't content to simply copy Stevie Wonder or Marvin Gaye. However, when he sang, *"I see trouble all down the line"*, he had no idea that he was prophesying his own life and career.

For all the brilliant ambition heard in Lewis's material, music as inspired by southern soul (Isaac Hayes, Al Green) as by 1960s psychedelic pop (Harry Nilsson, Brian Wilson), his subsequent four albums weren't enough to sustain him commercially, creatively or mentally. In addition to pissing off his label and getting dropped, in 2006, after playing a gig in New York, he withdrew from the limelight. He has remained relatively quiet since then.

16 years later, reteaming with producer/songwriter Sabina Smyth, a musical collaborator (and girlfriend) since the beginning, Taylor's comeback *Numb* opens with a blaring horn fanfare that wouldn't be out of place in a Bugs Bunny cartoon. Seconds later, however, "The Final Hour" slips into a more melancholy mode to address death, relationships and the importance of being true to one's self.

Much like D'Angelo, a fan of Taylor's music since the last millennium, in interviews he came across as a creative introvert and social misfit. This can be clearly heard on the title track "Numb", whose protagonist sounds like an overmedicated mental patient, a man so detached that he's not sure if he's enjoying himself. *"And the buzzing in my brain, so removed I feel no pain/And for all I know I could be having the time of my life"*, Taylor croons over a murky soundscape of electronic sadness.

Numb isn't perfect. There is an unnecessary (though cool) guitar solo on the break-up to make-up ballad "Feels So Good", while my least favourite track, the near suicidal "Worried Mind", sounds like a hip homage to Pink Floyd: *"I never see blue skies, I never see sunny days"*. There's a fine line between poetic honesty and therapy session, and I much prefer when Taylor projects his sadness through a cinematic noir persona as on "Is It Cool", which could serve as the theme for a US gangster movie. As one of the true (and often blue) geniuses of his generation, *Numb* serves as a musical reintroduction to the world of Lewis Taylor. I hope he decides to stay around for a while.
Michael A Gonzales

Tess Tyler
Fractals
Manners McDade DL
Tess Tyler is known as a composer for film and computer games whose style combines industrial electronics with classically trained piano playing. She has recorded internationally with many different orchestras, regularly with The Bournemouth Symphony, conducting recording sessions of her own music.

Tyler's debut solo album is split into two parts, *LP1* being Tyler's original composition, which switches between sinister cavernous environments and pounding basslines to delicate, arpeggiated piano lines with playful synth riffs and rich electronic textures. Rhythms slice abruptly between different tempi and metre, defying any sense of settled groove. *LP2* on the other hand has an interpretation of her graphic scores by The Spindle Ensemble, recorded live at Bristol's St George's Hall in May 2020.

The underlying theme of this album stems from her fascination with the simultaneous complexity and simplicity of fractals, which is expressed in the systemic clarity of her graphic scores, a series of beautifully intricate visual artworks, with a hint of Xenakis's architectural precision and Else Marie Pade's circular notation. A large circle outlines each piece, dissected by multi-directional straight lines into geometric shapes, some coloured shading and classical score markings. The Spindle Ensemble (Harriet Riley, tuned percussion; Daniel Inzani, piano; Jo Silverston, cello; Caelia Lunniss, violin) rearrange Tyler's vivid piano-led electronica for acoustic instruments. Melodic lines and rhythmic sequences are recognisable from *LP1*, but in a completely different soundworld. On "7ero" Riley's accomplished marimba playing, alongside warm cello and violin harmonies, gently reimagines the rich synthesizer textures from Tyler's performance. For "Instinct", dissonant string tones and low pulsing piano chords replace the eerie suspense of dark gliding electronic chords on *LP1*.

This is an ambitious and intriguing project that reflects Tyler's diverse approach, straddling classical, film music, industrial electronics and her exquisite graphic scores.
Jo Hutton

Tom Ward/Cath Roberts/Olie Brice/Johnny Hunter
Spinningwork
New Jazz And Improvised Music Recordings CD/DL
Spinningwork is Tom Ward (alto saxophone), Cath Roberts (baritone saxophone), Olie Brice (bass) and Johnny Hunter (drums) – a quartet formed through online rehearsals during Covid lockdown. They performed live for the first time in September 2021 at Newcastle upon Tyne's Festival Of Jazz And Improvised Music, and this debut album was recorded there. All four members have a share in composing while engaging in collective free improvisation. So it's a matter of freedom and structure – and I'm reminded of Adam Fairhall's comment that the classic free jazz of the 1960s makes frequent use of compositional structures.

"Jajko!", composed by Johnny Hunter, opens with a cappella horns, followed by Brice on bass against tinkly percussion by Hunter – celeste or xylophone. Cath Roberts's "Dust That Never Settles" has an intricate, twisting solo by the baritone saxophonist and evolves into an anthemic collective improvisation against a slow groove. On Olie Brice's "Moths Drink The Tears Of Sleeping Birds" the furious free momentum is often so close to a groove, it's hard to tell which it is.

Jonny Hunter's "Chromatogram" is in a more familiar dirge-like tumbling motion, developing into a squall with gentler episodes – the piece is full of eventful changes of feel and dynamics. On Tom Ward's "Invariance Behind The Flux" the stuttering, spasmodic contributions of the saxophonists produce a persuasive contrapuntal dynamic. Cath Roberts's "Kind Regards" is a rousing and often frantic closer.

The album is an exhibition of the dynamic variations that can be achieved by free jazz with its tumbling momentum. Cath Roberts in particular is a name to look out for, producing an eloquence and even lyricism from the baritone saxophone. This compelling release features some of the finest contemporary free jazz I've heard in the last year.
Andy Hamilton

Pumpkin Witch
The Return Of The Pumpkin Witch
Deathbomb Arc DL/MC
Sounds To Make You Shudder!
Various
Skin Graft CD/DL/MC
John Carpenter/Cody Carpenter/Daniel Davies
Halloween Ends
Sacred Bones CD/DL/LP/MC

Tangible as it felt, the funny thing about Haddonfield, Illinois – the setting of John Carpenter's *Halloween* – was that it was all fake. The town doesn't exist, and the film was shot 2000 miles west of the state, the crew hauling in binbags full of autumn leaves. Somehow, the film still conjures a distinctive sense of the Midwest as a site of suburban dread, its synth score melting imagined streets into deathscapes haunted by something blank and evil.

Spinning the *Sounds To Make You Shudder!* compilation, from the Illinois based Skin Graft label, Carpenter's nightmare is supplanted by the real thing. You can feel a sense of regional horror, a creeping, surreal thread that runs through the morbid blues of Chicago band Tijuana Hercules, the burbling synths of Missouri's Azita Youssefi and even the abstract spookytronics of a Chicago born expat like Jim O'Rourke. It's a thick atmosphere, and sometimes all you need to capture it is a couple of weirdos and a tape deck. On "Happy Halloween", the first release from Strangulated Beatoffs in a decade, a ghoulish slab of stoner concrète is spun entirely from Stan Seitrich and Fritz Noble's echoing voices.

Not every act on this set hails from the region. One of the standout cuts is from a Berlin based noise punk trio Cuntroaches, who are new to me (and seem capable of causing instantaneous brain melt). The bulk of the disc, though, captures the various mutations that the distinctively abrasive local variety of no wave has taken in the last decade. The Flying Luttenbachers return with "Violence Labyrinth", a dense grid of guitar shredding, while Lovely Little Girls bring an unlikely hybrid of Swedish extreme metal and funk, squeezing out an oozing, saxophone-heavy cover of Celtic Frost's "Procreation Of The Wicked".

I have no idea where in the haunted states (or beyond) the anonymous members of Pumpkin Witch lay down their pointy hats, but the trio evidently worship at Carpenter's shrine. Before signing with Deathbomb Arc they self-released a trilogy of lo-fi synth cassettes, boiling his 1978 soundtrack down to its hissing basics. Seizing gleefully on the artifice and cheapness of the season, those early tapes were mailed in orange trick or treat containers. Which makes me chuckle, and then notice something odd: at the time of writing, in the weeks leading up to October, there's still no spooky plastic in my local shop windows, just flags. The wolf masks and disposable cauldrons are being kept under the counter, the mischief of Samhain held at bay by a louder ritual.

Listening with this backdrop, as UK police silence anyone who disrupts the sacraments, *The Return Of The Pumpkin Witch* is cast in a new light. It feels weirdly prescient, an inadvertent satire. "Elder TG did an admirable job in aiding the harvest of enough souls to carry out Her return," grin the band in their cryptic sleevenotes. "He kept an entire town blind and complacent while The Three slowly culled them," bringing in "a future wherein She shall reign with us at Her side". Staking out new territory for the group, their now blasphemous liturgy begins with twinkling Carpenter synths (even sneaking in some 5/4 beats) before leaving his shadow for waves of black metal, radio noise and spooky samples. Not all of it chills – there's got to be a fresher way to inspire dread than to lift lines from *The Birds* – but at its best the tape sounds like its own weird little film, an illegitimate *Halloween* offshoot set in the pumpkin patches of Arkenfield.

Still think it can't be *Halloween* without Michael Myers? Well, there's another sequel on the way. It may be the last. Teaming up with his son Cody and his godson Daniel Davies (the trio behind those *Lost Themes* sets), Carpenter has reworked his score for each of David Gordon Green's recent films. And, for anyone keeping track, the latest version of the title cut is a monster. Replacing the vaporous choirs of last year's *Halloween Kills* with a pounding kick drum, the 5/4 anthem to suburban garrotting sounds nastier than ever. The other series staple "Laurie's Theme" is given an ethereal coda, opening a melancholy space missing from the earlier scores.

You can hear Carpenter saying goodbye to his old tunes here, drifting back to Haddonfield and laying his characters to rest… for now.
Rob Turner

Roots, bloody roots: Pumpkin Witch

Wench
Greatest Hits '88–'16
Bandcamp DL
Leech
Headless
Anonymous Club DL
Safety Trance
Noches De Terror
Boysnoize DL

The 2010s scene centred around New York's GHE20G0TH1K party formed a global underground of so-called deconstructed club, epitomised by sister labels Night Slugs and Fade To Mind. Alejandra Ghersi aka Arca never released on either, but she associated with people who did, including Kelela and Fatima Al Qadiri, each of whom intersected, one way or another, through the fashion, music and art network that also included fashion brand Hood By Air.

This is where Shayne Oliver comes in. The designer and DJ was an early Arca collaborator, one of whose releases was 2011's TLC-sampling "TRILLTAPE" by 88 – one of many names for the project now known as Wench. The retrospective selection of tracks from that era on *Greatest Hits '88–'16* lacks the grunge-y vitality of the early drops. That's presumably because a big advantage of the emergent digital mixtape culture of the time was the freedom to indulge the witch house-begotten tendency to mangle existing pop songs into eerie bass mutations without worrying about copyright. But while this compilation album is missing a key element that made the 88/HBA/Wench project so alluring, there are moments of lurching industrial clatter and layered vocal pitches that still resonate with the rap and R&B revisions of the past.

Oliver's other solo project Leech however still bristles with the dirty punk energy of the Mykki Blanco & The Mutant Angels-era ballroom and mutant disco-informed hiphop on *Headless*, with its hallmark "The Ha Dance" sampling industrial rock and EDM. Meanwhile, as glimmers of New York's post-club scenius would bleed into the mainstream via Arca's pop collaborations with the likes of Kanye West and Björk, so too has Cardopusher's Luis Garban, now Safety Trance, had his own input via recent work on Arca's *Kick* series including her "KLK" collaboration with Spanish singer-songwriter Rosalia.

Ghersi returns the favour by featuring on Garban's "El Alma Que Te Trajo" from the *Noches De Terror* EP, completing the circle of influence in the zeitgeist of post-club subversion.
Steph Kretowicz

Pumpkin Witch

The Columns

Avant Rock by Edwin Pouncey

Arthur Brown
Monster's Ball
Cleopatra CD/DL/LP
Hot on the heels of his recently released *Long Long Road* album, octogenerian rock god of hellfire Arthur Brown storms back with a Halloween themed collection of originals and esoteric cover versions that respectfully nods in the direction of the late Screaming Lord Sutch – joined by an impressive swarm of guest musicians and heavy friends. Weird to hear Stooges guitarist James Williamson and Damned drummer Rat Scabies tackle Cream's "I Feel Free" (the one song that sadly feels out of place here), but great that Brown has invited Deep Purple drummer Ian Paice and former Gong guitarist Steve Hillage into the studio to help record his manic version of Syd Barrett's "Lucifer Sam" oddity. Better yet is an apocalyptic rendering of Emerson, Lake & Palmer's "Karn Evil 9 1st Impression Pt 2", the perfect encore to Brown's musical Grand Guignol.

Clutch
Sunrise On Slaughter Beach
Weathermaker CD/DL/LP/MC
Frederick, Maryland based hard rock quartet Clutch return with a fresh sack of bruised blues. Along with the usual guitar/bass/drums/vocals, the group have added vibraphone, theremin and back-up singers, a move that has significantly enhanced their sound and bolstered the sci-fi boogie that rolls through the songs. Top of this particular heap is "Skeletons On Mars", where ZZ Top style guitar crashes into one of Hawkwind's silver space ritual machines. Elsewhere "Nosferatu Madre" and exit track "Jackhammer Our Names" seethe with an occult grandeur reminiscent of 1980s Blue Oÿster Cult.

Caleb Landry Jones
Gadzooks Vol 2
Sacred Bones CD/DL/LP
Texas born film actor Caleb Landry Jones reels back with the second act of his *Gadzooks* concept, a series of finely crafted and arranged oddball songs laced with his own special brand of psychedelic poison. *Gadzooks Vol 2* unspools like a movie for the mind, where the soundtrack has been spliced together using melted memories from exploitational flower power films, Kurt Weill cabaret collisions, warped exotica and sleazy showbiz. Especially memorable is the two part "Croc Killers", an unfathomably deep intro and outro song that gradually unravels into a looped collage of electrified madness.

Minipony
AJNA
Subsound CD/DL/LP
Hailing from Quito, Ecuador, this experimental metal trio was formed in 2012 by guitarist Amadeus Galiano, vocalist Emilia Moncayo and drummer Fillipo Brandrimarte – since replaced by Carlos Sánchez after Brandrimarte was killed by a car driver in 2016. *AJNA* is a wild and aggressively performed moshing of the senses, with Moncayo's yelping vocal and randomised voice sampling battling to the top over volleys of chopped guitar and Gatling gun drumming. Interspersed with eerie fragments of recorded breathing, their mix of high octane thrash and math metal, Latin beat and raw powered experimentation makes for an exciting and dangerous sounding excursion into the unknown.

Netherlands
Kali Corvette
Three One G DL/LP
Hosted by leader Timo Ellis, the sixth album from New York rockers Netherlands is littered with contributions from a glut of diverse guest musicians. These include (among others) Butthole Surfers vocalist Gibby Haynes, Lydia Lunch Retrovirus bass player Tim Dahl and Steve Reich vocalist Daisy Press, most of whom are buried beneath the rubble of Ellis's unrelenting electro-punk bombardments. That said, *Kali Corvette* comes across like a demonic jukebox, blaring everything from garage rock, hardcore punk and psychedelia to metal and electronica. The beating heart of the beast is provided by new drummer David Keith, whose perfectly timed percussion explosions give the needed anchorage for Ellis to work his chaotic musical magic.

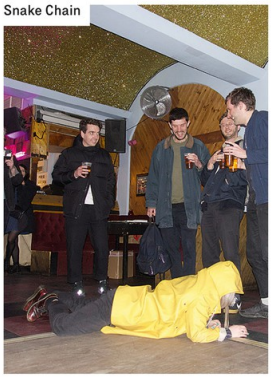
OvO
Ignoto
Artoffact CD/DL/LP
Italian experimental/noise rock duo OvO take their creative cue from Swans and Diamanda Galás – influences that run deep through the two epic tracks making up this latest ritual. A sense of doom permeates the opening "La Morte Muore", with Stefania Pedretti's mournful croak of a vocal and disembodied electric guitar rising and falling between the fissures of Bruno Dorella's tribalistic drum beats. The pace thickens on the following "Distillati Di Tenebre", where one could almost mistake the duo's fearsome black metalised dirge as an outtake from some newly discovered *Henhouse* era Mayhem cassette.

Karin Park
Private Collection
Pelagic CD/DL/LP
As its title suggests, Scandinavian singer, musician and composer Karin Park's seventh album is strictly personal, presenting rerecordings of some of her own favourite songs. Playing synthesizer, Mellotron and pump organ, Parks is joined by her guitarist husband Kjetil Nernes, Nurse With Wound synth player Andrew Liles and Benedetta Simeone on cello, who add an extra essence of mystery to the sound. Park is at her best when the mood turns minimalist. On "Blue Roses" and "Shine" she employs stroked piano to whip up languorous noir flecked emotions, while the more electronically charged "Look What You've Done" tilts towards something that just might make it on to the soundtrack of *Stranger Things*.

Snake Chain
Snake Chain
Upset The Rhythm DL/LP
Snake Chain are an art school five-piece from London fronted by Kate Mahony, a fantastic caterwauling singer who grabs hold of a rhythm and just won't let go. She is joined by guitarist Robert Syres, bass player Chris Hopkins (both of whom double up on synth) and drummer Joe Fergey. Mahony strikes a pose akin to some kind of séance photograph for the cover, and this out of body experience vibe resonates through the set. Strange, untamed and deliriously unpredictable, Mahony unhooks her being from reality while the rest of the group (together with a farmyard animal chorus) rage around her.

Tension Span
The Future Died Yesterday
Neurot DL/LP
Featuring members from Neurosis, Asunder and Dystopia, Tension Span evolved during the recent pandemic lockdown. Glued together with a punk/post-punk backbeat and rippling with samples, synths and unusual rhythmic blocks, they are not afraid to suddenly swerve off in a different direction. While a song like "Ventilator" is a celebration of classic punk, the more intriguing "Filaments" flows to a more hypnotic kosmische chug. Equally liberating is "I Have To Smile", a sturdy instrumental apt to leave the listener with a feeling of hope for the future. ☐

Snake Chain



Critical Beats by Joe Muggs

The 83rd
cru$hcity
Sermon 3 DL
The hardcore nature of Jersey/Philadelphia club music – riotous tempo, yelled commands to move, irreverently voracious sampling – makes it a great vehicle for militant sentiment. Some sharpen this with hi-tech sound, but New York's The 83rd, long a conduit for Black radical thought, leans hard into the sounds' innate rawness. There's some robosexual hiphop bounce and a broken trippy house blip, and four of the six tracks are relentlessly and unmistakeably furious, particularly on the title track, which samples the late SNCC and Black Panther leader Kwame Ture excoriating capitalist labour relations.

The AM
Sexworker EP
Deeptrax DL/12"
Feminised, sexualised technology gets a new twist in the hands of Detroit's Ann-Marie Teasley. The armed cyborg stripper pictured in the airbrush-style artwork seems like a classic pulp sci-fi image, but being on a record by a Black woman flips the subjectivity and asks us: is this being closer to that depicted on Janelle Monáe's 2010 debut album *The ArchAndroid*? With no voices or text, The AM's *Sexworker* isn't explicitly gendered or sexual. Rather, it is classic Detroit electro techno, exquisitely rendered with glassy sliding chords and laced with liquid acid – with all the "Night Drive (Thru Babylon)" sci-fi noir narrative sense that entails. Add this to titles like "Intercosmic Lapdance" and "Let Me Be Lonely", and *Sexworker* starts to have a life of her own.

Cruise 3
Various
Moves DL
Riding high speed four-square kicks, with wilfully low production values and wacky meme sample cut-ups, the cruise or freebeat sound of Lagos, Nigeria is a middle finger to the bougie affectations of the big money Afrobeats establishment. This anarchic spirit is encapsulated in the way the audio tag *"WAHALA DJ!"* (wahala meaning trouble, drama or chaos) is chucked into the mash of sampled voices on DJ Cora's "Anfani Cruise Beat". But it doesn't need announcing: the whack round the head with pots and pans percussion and car horns in DJ West's

Upset The Rhythm

"Oba Maraweray", and the absolutely relentless diddle-iddle-iddle-iddle-iddle-iddle toy piano in DJ Stainless's "Kokumo Virus" make it crystal clear this music has no truck with self-absorbed posing.

Eris Drew & Octo Octa
Day After A Night With U/Stars & Water
Fabric Originals DL/12"
DJ and life partners Drew and Octa inaugurate fabric's new singles club style imprint by taking us to their happy place – a warehouse somewhere in a mythical Britain where it is always 1992 and there is only one genre: rave. Drew's "Day After A Night With U" is all gushing euphoria, with rippling breakbeats, pianos, *"I found a real one"* diva sample and a glissando bass tone like a giant sighing in utmost satisfaction. Octa's track is a little more constrained by its four to the floor kick but still evokes a sea of hands reaching for the lights. Its one-note bassline, chimes and slowed down middle section exist in that moment just as post-Leftfield, pre-Gat Decor progressive house was about to achieve speciation while still fitting into a Fabio & Grooverider set.

Mina & Bryte
Abeka Bugatti Remixes
Earth Kicks DL
Either solo or as a member of the Boko! Boko! collective with Juba and Tash LC, or this Anglo-Ghanaian duo with MC Bryte, DJ Mina is a key figure in the ever rising wave of big, bashy, bassy, globally influenced dance music. All topped with Bryte's rabble-rousing party hosting, these remixes include DJ Lycox's kizomba influenced Lisbon lurch, General C'mamane's Durban gqom topped off with fizzing synth-pop chords, Caltonic's Pretoria amapiano supporting a cheeky Hammond solo, Gabon born Parisian Banga cooking up acid-grime-baile-funk, and Punjabi Londoner Darama's clattering two-step. But this isn't about fusion for fusion's sake; all the tracks bristle with specificity, even as they belong on the same dancefloor.

Karen KG Nyame
Taboo
Black Acre DL
The adoption of the tantric suspense of amapiano into the UK sonic vocabulary has been one of the biggest dynamic shifts since dubstep and grime went half time. And who better to demonstrate what can be done with it than Karen Nyame, whose trans-diasporic house productions have long incorporated a sensualism that's brought right to the fore on *Taboo*. She sings for the first time on record here, her relentless refrain of desire pushing through prohibitions to a constantly shifting mesh of hand percussion, shakers, echoing saxophone, shimmering gated trance chords, Spanish guitar and – in an audacious outro – a live string section. The groove feels simple but the more you start to pick out detail the more its gorgeous complexity overwhelms.

Philippa
There's A Ghost In My Synthesizer
Freerange DL/12"
Nu disco sure as shit isn't nu any more, but as long as talents like the Kiwi Berliner Philippa enter the fray, it's worth breaking out the mirrorball. Philippa brings elements you recognise from Idjut Boys, DJ Harvey and several dozen Norwegians – clonking percussion, big sloppy handclaps, lots of dub space – and rearranges them with audacity. What with the huge sheets of reverb and rinky-dink rototoms on "Dimes", the overwhelming chord sequence, frolicsome bass playing and gospel-like snippets of the MDMA drenched "I Guess I Have, Boy", and Mo Van Zandt's velvet croon on the Koze-ish "Slow it Down", clearly Philippa is not messing around here.

Tudor Acid
A Tune You Hear On The Wind
Tudor Beats DL
Deeply rooted in classic 1990s artificial intelligence electronica, Bristolian Tudor Acid aka Richard Wigglesworth gradually found his own voice while exploring themes of pastoralism and neurodivergence. On his recent *Empathy For Cyborgs* album he incorporated the most heartbreaking atmospheres of drill production into his sound – they made an impressively natural fit thanks to his detailed understanding of the electro continuum. On this EP of landscape inspired tunes, the structures of early Autechre are unmistakeable, but the real action – and distinct musical personality – is happening in the flurries of hi-hat triplets and 8-bit fizz that eddy through those structures like swirls of chilly mist.

Bamao Yendé
Rdv Discoteca
Boukan DL
Where some producers look to join dots between vernacular forms with their integrity intact, Paris based Boukan Records founder Bamao Yendé – like his sometime colleague Jaymie Silk – prefers to blow them apart. Across the eight tracks that make up Yendé's latest release *Rdv Discoteca* the listener is treated to UK and Baltimore breakbeats, grime-like juddering, Timbaland/Darkchild style scampering, rave euphoria, half-time dubstep merging into booty electro, electroclash insouciance floating together with the ghost of P-funk, and a whole lot more besides. But the styles Yendé works with here aren't deconstructed as such – at least not in the sense of deliberate cracks and joins being shown. Instead, they are reformed and reincorporated into deliciously smooth and palatable forms, to the point where you start to wonder if this wasn't how they were supposed to sound in the first place. □

Dub & Reggae by Steve Barker

Horace Andy
Midnight Scorchers
On-U Sound CD/LP
This follow-up set was originally intended as a dub companion to *Midnight Rocker*, the Adrian Sherwood produced album from earlier this year that revisited highlights from the long career of veteran vocalist Horace Andy. Along the way, however, the singer and his producer toughened up the project into a sound system workout, recruiting deejays Daddy Freddie and Lone Ranger, both of whom first recorded for Studio One (as did Andy). The result is a tougher but spacier sound. The original vocals are mixed in more prominently, and interplay with the deejay interjections relates to the lyrical content – check "Midnight Scorcher", the version to the cover of Andy's Massive Attack collaboration "Safe From Harm". The set also features "Sleepy's Night Cap" – an update on "Rock To Sleep", originally a 1976 Yard 7" produced by Augustus Pablo and here reprising Pablo's melodica while trading melody lines with a violin.

Creation Rebel
Lows & Highs
Lantern/On-U Sound LP
One of those 1980s On-U Sound albums that got sucked into the Cherry Red MegaCorp when Sherwood & Co kept their label going by any means necessary. Marking Creation Rebel's last contribution to the On-U catalogue, this set mixes conventional tracks – such as the single "Independent Man Pts 1 & 2" and a cover of John Holt's "Love I Can Feel" – with the more abstract "Rubber Skirt (Pts 1/2/3)", among others. The album's sound is inimitable early 80s edgy mixed with trademark Sherwood experiment, very occasionally veering back into the safe home of post-roots music.

Disco Reggae Rockers
Various
Soul Jazz CD/2×LP
Another great sucker punch party set from the selectors down at Soul Jazz to see out the rest of the year dancing in style. It opens with Devon Russell's cover of Curtis Mayfield's epically upful "Move On Up". Sourced from a 1984 7" on Earl 'Chinna' Smith's High Music label, the song is credited to Curtis Mayfoald! That's probably not a mistake given how most Jamaican cover versions credited the song as 'adapted', even when the

Méryll Ampe
W7E

Perverts In White Shirts
Meaning What Exactly?

Moth Drakula
S/T

Network Glass and Jason Crumer
Prerequisite

MISANTHROPICAGENDA.COM

source tune was a world wide hit! This compilation includes a bunch of high grade reggae disco versions of funk, soul and disco classics, with a second Mayfield cover providing the highlight in the form of Devon Russell's "We The People Who Are Darker Than Blue", with an edit of the version "Stand In You Glory" segued into an extended version. It's also fascinating to hear Derrick Harriott covering Louisa Mark's early UK lovers rock smash "Caught You In A Lie".

Augustus Pablo & Rockers All Stars
Lightning And Thunder
Only Roots LP
The French reggae imprint Only Roots has forged a fruitful longterm relationship with the estate of the late Augustus Pablo, resulting in a series of high quality reissues, mainly in 7" and 12" vinyl format. This collection of unreleased recordings and dubplates is on an altogether higher level, making it an absolute must for the Melodica King's legion of fans. The main attraction is the dubplate mixes of the Jah Shaka power play "Jah No Parshall", here retitled "Gates Of Zion". One astonishing dub mix features vocals from Prince Mohammed aka George Nooks in his early deejay guise. Chopped from the lyric and dropped into the chasmic dub mix, the phrase *"heavy as lead"* would have made an apt title. A number of unidentified vocals are generically credited as Rockers All Stars, as on the cut to the rhythm of Jacob Miller's "Who Say Jah No Dead".

Top Ranking DJ Session Volumes 1 & 2
Various
Doctor Bird CD
Volume 1 is a long out of print 1979 deejay roots compilation, and the second volume followed in 1981, both originally released on Jamaican imprints run by Joe Gibbs, a producer who just loved deejays. Featured are unmissable classic tunes by the cream of the 1970s, Big Youth, U-Roy, Trinity, I-Roy, Shorty The President and Lizzy each delivering their wisdom over what have since become standard riddims such as "Joy In The Morning", "Equal Rights", "Dub Organizer" and "Heavy Rock".

Trensum Tribe
Soundsystem Music Volume 1
Trensum International DL/12"
Over the years dub production has become something of a cottage industry across Europe. Indeed there are few regions left uninfected by the dub bug. Trensum Tribe's Filip Loeb and Johan Smedå run a sound system and label out of Stockholm, while making collaborative connections with the international dub community. Starting out almost ten years ago, their main outlet is now via Bandcamp, although this new set has also been pressed up on 12" vinyl. Its four diverse cuts start with the gentle half-stepper "Genesis", whose distant synth horn calls and riddim are in the style of those Burial Mix templates overlaid with vibes lines. □

Electronics by Spenser Tomson

Avola
When It Reigns It Poors Vol 15: Futile Feudal Food Aisle
EMS CD/DL
As electronic duo Erlond, Portland musicians Vern Avola and Ian Gorman Weiland make utopic synthscapes that often lean into deep sci-fi concepts. Their previous release *Airship Dreams* reads like the soundtrack to an imagined cyberpunk swashbuckler. As a solo project, Avola switches retrofuturist optimism for a brutal electronic grind that's spikier than ever on this 15th volume in a series of live performances recorded at Portland's Mississippi Studios. As the music progresses, the ambiguity of the title's wordplay manifests in the sound; the opening track slurs electronic grumble into a broken galloping pummel, though by the time it nears the end with "New Whirled Odor Pt 6" the industrial clangour has softened into a monstrous growl, adding a wretched but satisfying layer of gore.

Calsutmoran
BIOMECHANOID BUTCHER SHOP
Bandcamp DL
If you visit Calsutmoran's Bandcamp page you'll find *BIOMECHANOID BUTCHER SHOP* tagged as biomechanical, extraterrestrial, hyperdimensional and occult. In keeping with its obscure and esoteric nature, the titles are written in a mutated, almost unreadable cuneiform which makes them quite hard to read. All of this theatre is ultimately ephemeral because the music is fucking brilliant – the opening track lulls you into a false sense of sludgetronic security, catacomb reverberations rolling around distant industrial clang. As the tracks progress, a kind of broken pop emerges, mangled melodic snippets coalescing as they slither through the shit. The highlight is the fourth track, which recalls the disjointed pulse of Icky Reels's *Plips* or Bola's *Fyuti* if it had been chewed up and spat out by something fantastical and large.

Five Bubble Criteria
VI
Superpolar Taïps DL/MC
Five Bubble Criteria deal in a kind of dissolving fantasy Americana built on twanging guitar lines that melt into broken AM radio white noise chatter. On "Reservoir", the addition of a spoken narrative by Chip Perkins moves the sound away from abstract, doomy ambience towards denatured horror commentary, like a video game that has swapped the living dead for the citizens of Twin Peaks. As the record closes, its style changes again, "Vays-Rays" concocting a wobbly jangle that sounds a bit like if Nouvelle Vague had covered The Smashing Pumpkins. If it's completely odd, it's also completely brilliant.

Homo
Altered Ego
Muteant Sounds DL
With its growling electronics and intermittent beats, "Pop Cadaver Of The Month" sounds like it has succumbed to a bit rate error. Filipe Silva is a member of Porto's SOOPA collective, but *Altered Ego* is a solo project under his Homo moniker and lands with a satisfying crunch. "Halfway To The Last Incarnation" stretches and melts the glitching core of the opening track into unsettling shapes as ghostly voices ooze into the distance above warped horror synth. But the rest of the album is caustic and hard, an exploration of dislocation and anguish – not so much an altered ego as an ego completely obliterated as it's swallowed into an industrial waste macerator.

Kemper Norton
Rife
Woodford Halse DL/MC
While much of Kemper Norton's work explores the arcane fringes of Devon and Cornwall's folk tradition, *Rife* appears comparatively abstract – at least at first. The title track is an almost 15 minute slow build of milky electronics morphing and swelling in cosmic scale. But the second piece earths that wide-skied drone by introducing lyrics from the traditional "My Love Has Gone". Kemper Norton often weaves threads of folk through their electronics, but the vulnerability of the vocals here is startling: *"She's a voice like a nightingale and skin like a dove/And the song that she sang it was all about love"* is delivered with a stark honesty. Stripped of all vocal artifice, it reveals the brutality at the core of these folk tales. Surrounded by this vast electronic swirl, it's completely compelling.

Multi-Surface
Aesthetics of Inequality Triangles
Not Not Fun DL/MC
Named after a technique in Japanese gardening, the sound Multi-Surface cultivate wouldn't be out of place drifting through such zen spaces. On his first release in eight years, Tomokazu Fujimoto recaptures the clean-lined drone of 2014's *Magic Power Of The Magnetic Tape*. The rolling percussion and slowly shifting drones of "View Of Foothill" set a meditative tone which continues throughout. If "Sky Too Blue" and "Moon Oil" are similar to Japanese minimalists such as Joe Hisaishi, Fujimoto's work is denser and warmer, taking similar textures and stacking them into lush strata.

Roméo Poirier
Living Room
Faitiche DL/LP
French musician Roméo Poirier has been a member of bands such as Original Folks and Herzfeld Orchestra, but *Living Room* is the third release in his more recent solo phase. He's also the son of artist and musician Philippe Lamiral Poirier whose presence is felt on the record through artefacts taken from his collection of samples. When Poirier introduces vocal snippets from his father's archive, he transcends the illusive wooze of previous album *Hotel Nota*, elevated by the emotive weight of these melodic voices folded into the mixture. Album highlight "Le Case Degli Altri" sounds like The Avalanches if they had made The Caretaker's *Everywhere At The End Of Time*.

Cosey Fanni Tutti
Delia Derbyshire: The Myths And The Legendary Tapes (Original Soundtrack Recordings)
Conspiracy International CD/DL/LP
Writer and director Caroline Catz released her docudrama *Delia Derbyshire: The Myths And The Legendary Tapes* in 2020. Interviewed by *The Wire*'s Claire Biddles, she talks about the "ghostly background character" played by Cosey Fanni Tutti in the film. "The idea was to choose sounds from Delia's archive together and for Cosey to repurpose those sounds to create new pieces… in search of the creative spirit of Delia." Cosey's soundtrack does just that. "Cornet Lament" melts smoky brass into hot radiophonic rumble, while "Guitar (Twickenham Studio 3)" recalls a tougher edged incarnation of Derbyshire and David Vorhaus's White Noise. As full pastiche, these pieces might have been toothless and sterile, but conjured through Cosey's caustic sonic prism they have a considerable heft and incisive bite.

Pete Um
Surface Zero
Cudighi DL/MC
As Pete Um, Cambridge musician Peter Gregory does a good line in lo-fi despair. On *Surface Zero*, it feels as though that simmering despair is about to boil over into full emotional meltdown, the sardonic observations of his earlier 2022 LP *Twilight Jubilee* replaced with odd tales about protagonists nearing the end of their tether. On "Super Tramp", Gregory describes a character wracked with exhaustion who implores, *"Tell me/Won't you tell me who I am"*, while "Long-Haired Lady" surrounds a grotty bassline with sinister chimes as the narrator repeats *"Long… haired… lady"*, keeping the words in his mouth until they become creepy. Elsewhere, the sound recalls Jacknife Lee and the late Cathal Coughlan's Telefís collaboration. On tracks like "All For The War", where the narrative is backed by queasy nursery rhyme electronic melodies, the result is far more unsettling. □

Hiphop & R&B
by **Richard Stacey**

Amos X EF Knows
Halkias Et Mullen
Gold On The Mixer DL
There are times when there's nothing better than the sweet release of an MC way beyond giving a damn, rhyming a claim to be *"the best in Blackpool"* with the boast *"My shit don't stop, like wiping after a bad poo"*. *Halkias Et Mullen* – named for the New York based hosts of the comedy podcast *Cum Town* – offers up a wealth of such moments over its four tracks. At one point Amos claims he's the northern Rakim, backing himself up with a dazzling chain of rhymes worthy of The God MC himself, *"Bagging and tagging"*, he starts, *"and ragging and shagging and blagging and bragging"*. Not to be outdone, EF Knows stakes his claim for immortality as *"Satan's answer to God Fahim"*. Insanely stoopid brilliance.

Central Cee
LA Leakers Freestyle
Power 106 FM/YouTube DL
Three and a half glorious minutes from West London's Central Cee, riding the wave of his OK-ish international breakthrough "Doja" to drop essential knowledge on our US cousins. *"You say the trenches"*, he explains, *"we say the ends/You say say 'y'all', we say 'you lot'/You say 'restroom', we say 'toilet'"*. In the grand tradition of Big L's 1998 single "Ebonics" and Karl Hinds's Y2K UK response "Don Grama", with a heartwarming aura of international respect which would have been unthinkable back in the day.

Flohio
Out Of Heart
AlphaTone CD/DL/LP
Anyone drawn in by the effervescent energy of Flohio's work on the come-up over the last four years had best moderate their expectations before diving into her full-length debut *Out Of Heart*. An introspective work germinated in lockdown isolation, on a bed of what the Nigerian Londoner calls "arcade nostalgia", the opening half of the album especially is weighed down by the type of cathartic melancholy which demands to exist more than it needs to be heard. Redemption of sorts can be found in the restless, epic "LMPM" and the icy hymn of thanks that is "Feel Alive". But it's not until the closing track "Against The Grain" that everything coheres into a motivational defiance which feels like it's a logical progression from the indomitable spirit of those early records rather than a rejection of it.

Flo Milli
You Still Here, Ho?
RCA/'94 Sounds DL
That *You Still Here, Ho?* title is apt. Much as the charismatic powers of Cardi B and even Nicki Minaj remain strong, two years on from "WAP" we've reached the point where ecstatic empowerment starts to sound a little like numb desperation. Not that it's so explicit on the second album by Alabama's Flo Milli. She's still very much celebrating the power of her pussy to function as a *"goldmine"*, but it's clear enough in the glazed rituals of "Pay Day" and "FNGM". To be fair, they're outliers on an album that for the most part is ebulliently nasty pop, the monumental "Big Steppa" and the gleefully foul "No Face" in particular will be irresistible to anyone raised on Trina and Missy Elliott, daring us to switch off as the party spirals out of control.

JID
The Forever Story
Interscope/Dreamville DL
Five years on from JID's major label debut *The Never Story*, its triumphant sequel *The Forever Story* finds the wickedly slick Atlanta MC move from raging statements of what he's not to a broader view of him self defined by the insanity around him, alongside his attempts to pull his people up and out of it. It's heavyweight stuff delivered with a beautiful lightness of touch. For every caustic bullseye like the moment he states his ambition to *"agitate the white guilt, explain the black burden"*, there's one where the sheer joy audible in his flow and his wordplay hits home equally hard. Protest is basic, necessary and effective, but repurposing the cadences from Michael Jackson's gibberish at the end of "Don't Stop Till You Get Enough" into *"Momma said the messiah's in moccasins"* takes a special kind of genius.

LMD
Flying High
Bang Ya Head CD/DL/LP/MC
For an album that's been brewing since 2010, LMD's *Flying High* is an incredibly tight half hour. At core it's a smoke session, with Madlib providing the soundtrack for longtime collaborators MED and Declaime to shoot the shit with fellow veteran LMNO of The Visionaries. First time round, hearing MED claim the title track is about flying high artistically rather than chemically, it's easy to be cynical. This is the guy who started his verse telling us his DNA is *"a G a day"*. But he's not bullshitting – there is vital wisdom baked into the funk, from the stark creative insights of "Super" and "High Stakes" to "Kool" where LMNO laments home crowds hearing his words as foreign because they can't focus through the interference in their heads.

Sampa The Great
As Above, So Below
Loma Vista CD/DL/LP
As an opening sentiment, Zambian singer and MC Sampa The Great's *"You can do anything, trying to forget who you are"* is bold. If it's enough to have me fist-pumping in agreement first time out, it falls flat on repeat, a little more repulsive with each rewind. It's an aesthetic rather than ideological reaction. When she follows it with a similar message fast-rapping on the pleasingly brutal "Mask On", the impact is deeper and more enduring. The pattern repeats elsewhere: the big showcase tracks like "Never Forget" and "Let Me Be Great" sag a little under the weight of their pomposity, where deep cuts "Imposter Syndrome" and "IDGAF" just get on with showcasing her untouchable cool.

Smellington Piff & Illinformed
Roma Supreme
Real Life Drama CD/DL/LP/MC
Of all the stupid names in UK rap, Smellington Piff is perhaps the most unfortunate, the type of moniker that makes me want to throw out my cannabis prescription and join Jehovah's Witnesses. It's a shame. Though not entirely misleading, such stonerisms are but a small part of the brilliantly imaginative tableaux making up *Roma Supreme*, an intricate portrait of life thriving on the breadline in 21st century Britain. The cartoon frippery of Illinformed's beats echo Piff's hangdog humour, reaching beyond optimism to a visionary pride. "Few Things" and "Play My Part" stand out as potent distillations of attitude, but "Poor Mans Swag" is the anthem here. A catalogue of thrift where *"You never wash because you can't afford the water bills"* sounds like testimony to a joyous liberation.

Tink
Pillow Talk
Empire/WD/Winter's Diary CD/DL
For those of us who, more often than not, find ourselves lost amid the compulsive obscenities of contemporary culture, the intimacy of *Pillow Talk* – Chicago based singer and rapper Tink's third album in three years following 2020's *Hopeless Romantic* and 2021's *Heat Of The Moment* – is one that takes a little while to sink in. She's casually sexual but this is almost incidental as she sings and occasionally raps about yearning and madness and lust with an economy of style and conversational sincerity that are no doubt enhanced by her policy of banning all men from the studio during vocal takes. Raw gems like "Goofy" and "Cum See Me" shock not because they're explicit, but because they're intimate in a way that's all too rare. Tink sings like nobody's listening. □

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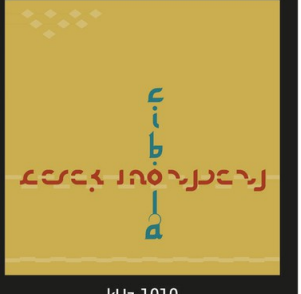

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Jazz & Improv by Andy Hamilton

Martin Archer/John Jasnoch/Sarah Farmer/Lee Boyd Allatson
Wasp Honey
Discus CD/DL
Apparently some species of wasp, such as the Mexican honey wasp, do make a kind of honey – but Martin Archer didn't know that when he titled this album. The phrase, coined by a friend, matched his quartet's hard-edged sounds. Here, Archer (saxophones), Sarah Farmer (violin), John Jasnoch (bass guitar) and Lee Boyd Allatson (drums) draw on AACM free jazz, free improv and contemporary composition. The album opens with the dirge-like "Flood", featuring querulous sopranino saxophone from Archer. On "Two Way Traffic", a strident opening develops into a furious battle of wills between Archer and Farmer, encouraged by slashing percussion and fugitive bass.

DoomCannon
Renaissance
Brownswood CD/DL/LP
Reimagining the young Black British experience, the South London multi-instrumentalist, composer and producer DoomCannon's debut release *Renaissance* "is my letter to London about how it raised me and shaped who I am today". "Dark Ages" introduces a dystopian vision of the contemporary world, with Kaidi Akinnibi prominent on soprano saxophone. Breaking with the album's generally sombre mood, the reflective "Entrance To The Unknown" opens with DoomCannon's lyrical channel-switching electric keyboards, its gorgeous theme beautifully interpreted by Akinnibi on tenor saxophone. On "Black Liberation Prologue", strings are very thickly laid on; "Times", with vocals by Lex Amor, restores equilibrium with sensitive keyboard work.

Gordon Grdina's Nomad Trio
Boiling Point
Astral Spirits/Bandcamp CD/DL
Gordon Grdina/Mark Helias/Matthew Shipp
Pathways
Attaboygirl CD/DL
Vancouver based guitarist and oud player Gordon Grdina is prolific – he has released four albums this year already – but not at the expense of quality. *Boiling Point* is his second with pianist Matt Mitchell and drummer Jim Black. All compositions are by Grdina, and the dominant mood is full frontal assault. The opening title track and "Parksville" set the tone, with complex counterpoint between guitar and piano, jazz rock power and dense textures. "Shibuya" is an insistent march, while the melancholic "Cali-lacs" features Grdina on oud. "All Caps" ends the album with a ferocious outburst. On *Pathways* he works with pianist Matthew Shipp and bassist Mark Helias in place of a drummer. Given its free improvisation approach, the album is very different to *Boiling Point*. Tracks begin in a more exploratory vein, often rising in intensity, but the results are less fiercely full-on – reflecting the uncertainty that's an inevitable counterpart to spontaneity. Nine taut tracks are infused by Grdina with Mid-Eastern inflections, his acidulous guitar and oud anchored by Helias's song of the earth bass.

Jon Lipscomb
Conscious Without Function
Relative Pitch CD/DL
Guitarist Jon Lipscomb, based in Malmö, Sweden, crosses free improv, noise and free jazz, conjuring dissonant extremes with visceral power. He learned his craft gigging in Baptist churches around Baltimore before attending Berklee – but neither location suggests the fearsome style of *Conscious Without Function*. On "Parallel Event Streams", furious fingerpicking concludes with explosive outbursts; the scrabbling of "Phatic Culture" is broken up by stentorian blaring. This challenging music is not to be listened to in a fragile state of mind.

Noise In The Key Of Life
Noise In The Key Of Life
Bandcamp DL+Pbk
Poet and spoken word artist Lukasz Polowczyk explores the translation of poetry across different media. As RQM in the early 2000s, he contributed vocals to Al Haca and Stereotyp, and performed with MIA and Missy Elliott. But his new release *Noise In The Key Of Life* is a wordless 24 minute composition. Made up of short segments, it opens with a haunting medley of saxophones, the sound filtered and veiled, that disappears into a vortex of white noise, setting the pattern for subsequent segments. A haunting release.

Playfield
Stepping Out Vol 1
577 CD/DL
This is an unusual album by 577 Records founder and multi-instrumentalist Daniel Carter. He's on saxophones, clarinets, flute and trumpet, with a band that includes Ayumi Ishito (tenor saxophone) and Luisa Muhr (vocals), most of them doubling on electronics. He draws on outdoor performance and a New York ambience of conversations, car horns and birdsong, and for his group's first studio set, he uses post-production to insert urban field recordings. "Ice Cream Mountain" is powered by Jon Panikkar's tumbling drumming. Elsewhere, the music takes on a slashing jazz rock feel reminiscent of Miles Davis's *In A Silent Way*, replete with Carter's Milesian horn. The results are quicksilver, eventful and colourful.

Tom Skinner
Voices Of Bishara
International Anthem/Brownswood/Nonesuch CD/DL/LP
The title of Skinner's debut as leader references cellist Abdul Wadud's label Bisharra – though he spells it with one r – meaning "bringer of good news". The album originated in a Played Twice session at London's Brilliant Corners, where Skinner's group – Shabaka Hutchings and Nubya Garcia (tenor saxophones), Kareem Dayes (cello) and Tom Herbert (bass) – improvised their response to Tony Williams's 1964 debut album *Life Time*. Intense post-production, Skinner explains, meant "going really hard into the edits between instruments", like Theo Parrish "chopping up tunes and looping sections", though there's an art that conceals art, as this work isn't obvious to the listener. The album opens with the churning, ecstatic title track, followed by the brief, eerie "Red 2" – variations on a haunting descending figure – and the dark, catchy shuffle rhythm of "The Journey", explored by cellist Kareem Dayes. A taut, mesmerizing half-hour.

Sloth Racket
Organising Space
Luminous CD/DL
Formed in 2015, baritone saxophonist Cath Roberts's main group Sloth Racket feature Sam Andreae (tenor saxophone), Anton Hunter (guitar), Seth Bennett (bass) and Johnny Hunter (drums). On their fifth album, Roberts creates what she calls semi-graphic scores for the band, with composed material interlaced with improvised sections. A thunderous riff opens "Not This Time" with the tumbling momentum of free jazz; on "Thorny", an equally thunderous one drives a groove. A superbly conceived and executed release.

Cecil Taylor
With (Exit) To Student Studies Revisited
ezz-thetics CD/DL
Despite the free jazz label, strong compositional structures underlie Cecil Taylor's music. That's true of the studio and live sessions here, recorded a month apart in 1966. "With (Exit)" is from Blue Note's *Conquistador!*, featuring the front line horns of Jimmy Lyons and Bill Dixon, with bassists Alan Silva and Henry Grimes and drummer Andrew Cyrille. Taylor's partnership with alto saxophonist Lyons lasted from 1961 till the latter's death in 1986, and formed the basis of his Unit. The four live tracks, previously released as *Student Studies* and *Great Paris Concert*, feature a quartet without Dixon and Grimes. In Taylor's playing, the dirty, earthy blues are never far below the coruscating surface. □

Modern Composition by Julian Cowley

Purbayan Chatterjee
Saath Saath
Believe DL
While cycles of continuity are deeply ingrained within Hindustani classical music, Purbayan Chatterjee has a reputation for springing surprises, such as his collaboration with banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck on last year's *Unbounded*. Still the brilliant sitarist embodies tradition directly, in the sense that he studied the instrument as a child with one of its most widely revered exponents, Nikhil Banerjee. Recently recorded in Bombay, *Saath Saath* (translating as *Doing Something Together*) features ragas that are broadly shaped by inherited musical values and practices, energised by the performative dynamism and exuberance of Chatterjee and his collaborators. These include bamboo flute player Rakesh Chaurasia, recalling through his breathtaking agility and fluency the timeless, life-enhancing music of his uncle, Hariprasad Chaurasia.

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay
Withering Field
Crónica CD/DL
Readers familiar with his writings on sound and media arts will be aware of the theoretical vigour and breadth of insight that Budhaditya Chattopadhyay channels through his work. *Withering Field* responds directly to ecological threats to habitats in the southern hemisphere and to traditional modes of living fostered by those environments. A montage of field recordings from South Asian locations shows the intricate rhythms of the natural world and the long established coherence of tribal societies, voiced through communal singing, being subjected to abrupt upheaval and dispossession. The relentless incursion of rail transport resembles a jackhammer pulverising customary ways. The audible rapidity of road travel transforms the rich specificity of place into the convenient anonymity of space. Passing cars express through Doppler shift their indifference to locality. Ghostly human voices trail after in their wake.

Doris Dennison
Earth Interval
Elision Fields DL
Tom Welsh unearthed this sprightly composition for two percussionists while rummaging through the archives of AA Leath, an associate of dance pioneer

Anna Halprin. Chicago's galvanic Third Coast Percussion ensemble needed little persuasion to bring Doris Dennison's score to life. At the close of the 1930s in Seattle, Dennison was a member of John Cage's earliest percussion quartet. *Earth Interval* reveals her at work in her own right in 1956. The first and last of its three movements have the kind of crisp rhythmic clarity that might be expected from music designed to match Leath's choreography. In between, "Air Tide" luxuriates in the sonic halos of gongs and chiming bowls. A welcome discovery offering a tantalising glimpse of a tale as yet largely untold.

Brian Harnetty
Words And Silences
Winesap CD/DL
On becoming a Trappist monk, Thomas Merton stopped wondering how to make his way through life and simply began to live. His prolific output in prose and verse found a home at New Directions publishing house. At the time of Merton's death in 1968, electrocuted accidentally in Thailand, he was also well known as a social activist. Recordings of his warm, strong voice are heard on Ohio based composer Brian Harnetty's *Words And Silences*. Merton responds to writings by Samuel Beckett and Michel Foucault, contemplates mysticism and perplexity, deplores racial injustice in America. Harnetty frames Merton's humane eloquence with discreet and dignified music, realised on piano with a brass and reed quartet. The monk's voice remains vital and apt; the settings are just right.

Andrew McIntosh
Little Jimmy
Kairos CD/DL
Pianists Laura Barger and Julia Den Boer and percussionists Russell Greenberg and Sae Hashimoto, collectively Yarn/Wire, renew their engagement with the work of Andrew McIntosh. The Los Angeles based composer draws inspiration from immersion in natural environments. In his music that experience translates into focus upon fine detail, rather than a taste for expansive scale. Barger's performance of *I Have A Lot To Learn* registers McIntosh's fascination with subtle gradations of each note's decay. Two longer compositions, *Learning* and *Little Jimmy* integrate environmental sounds. These recordings enrich the instrumental fabric, while inviting the same kind of attentive response. Form in this music is not a theoretical abstraction, but provision of a context for the cultivation of alertness and awareness, opening out to otherness.

David Ryan
Fields And Refrains
Aural Terrains CD
Cambridge based artist David Ryan composed *Fields And Refrains* with guitarist William Crosby in mind. Granted latitude in choosing his palette of sound events, Crosby scrapes the strings of his acoustic instrument, taps its body, plinks above the nut, generating patterns that shift and evolve. Precisely plucked and rung notes are added. This contrasting layer, responding and interacting in acoustic space, suggests parallels with the vibrant relationships of shapes and colours in Ryan's widely exhibited visual artworks. *Sanjo*, a comparably collaborative and dialogic composition, unfurls with bulbous grace in the hands of double bassist Dominic Lash. *Overlays* introduces still more weight and depth as Luca Innocenti flits between the glimmer and glower of a church organ. Those three soloists are brought together briefly for *Ligeia*, a lucid distillation of their instrumental voices.

TLF Trio
Sweet Harmony
Latency DL
This Danish trio's initials stand for cellist Caecilie Trier, pianist Jakob Littauer and guitarist Mads Kristian Frøslev. Together they make intriguingly ironic chamber music that mingles blatant echoes of a wide variety of styles with wry adaptation, exaggerated emphasis or distortion of perspective in their delivery. One track may overtly reverberate with trappings of the Baroque; another may pulsate with submerged techno beats. One moment you are listening to reconstructive homage, the next to deconstructive critique. The trio phrase and pace each piece with meticulous care, casting an allusion, then dislocating a form. Expectations hover over unanticipated gaps where the material has frayed, or the connection has been severed. *Sweet Harmony* (a title shared consciously with an early 1990s hardcore breakbeat single by Liquid) suggests some kind of sonic archaeology, reconstructing fragments from a dig.

Katharina Weber
In Márta's Garden
Intakt CD/DL
Swiss pianist Katharina Weber recalls her friendship with Márta Kurtág, another remarkable pianist, through this thoroughly absorbing solo set. Weber's own compositions and improvisations are framed by two pieces from *Játékok* (Hungarian for *Games*), a collection written by Kurtág's husband György. A further crucial relationship celebrated here is that between the pianist and the Bösendorfer, which is such a substantial presence in her music; not merely a convenient medium but a rich generative source and field of possibility. Weber's intimate involvement with that instrument allows her to compose with expressive concision and to improvise, on the basis of those written pieces, with proportionate expansiveness. The recording process has captured that relationship as an auditory glow that pervades this reflective yet compelling music. □

Noise, Industrial & Beyond by Emily Pothast

Concentration
Aren't You Going To Introduce Me To Your Friend?
Avon Terror Corps DL/2×LP
The music on the latest from Australian/German trio Concentration seems designed to make the listener as uncomfortable as possible, from the menacing, Portishead on cough syrup queasiness of "Who Wants To Fuck Me?" to the extended Alan Bishop-esque rant on "Diet Of Worms" – all slathered with enough smooth jazz saxophone to summon the late George Michael back for an encore. While the production is quite subtle and multifaceted, the theatre kid vibes are anything but – nor is the hyper-irony that coats the entire enterprise in a thick residue of smarm. This album is weird, but more importantly, it needs you to notice how weird it's being, which unfortunately undoes a little bit of the weirdness.

Bruce Gilbert
Radio On Remix
purge.xxx DL/MC
Chris Petit's 1979 UK cinema classic *Radio On* makes visible the link between driving and film, connecting the scrolling world that appears through the moving window to the one framed by the camera. Its 1998 DVD release included a 24 minute video essay called *Radio On (Remix)*, which featured a reimagining of the film's soundtrack by Wire's Bruce Gilbert. An extremely limited cassette of this remix has been released by purge.xxx, along with a digital version provocatively priced at £666. Gilbert's interventions plunge the listener into a disorienting world of distorted voices amid molten, half-recognisable wisps of music from David Bowie, Robert Fripp and more. The effect is a distancing that disrupts nostalgia, reminding the listener that while the past can never be revisited, it can always be remade.

Hocus
Narrow
Colectivo Casa Amarela DL/MC
Portuguese experimental musician João Almeida is best known for his improvisatory trumpet work. However his debut release as Hocus traffics in pure electronic noise, created through the no input method of using a mixer as an instrument, generating feedback inside the device itself. This restricted sonic

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palette leads to an emphasis on noise textures: sputtering, churning, grating, grinding, fizzing, fluttering, buzzing and extremely high frequency squealing – all building to a mind-erasing climax. This limited cassette comes with a chrome sculptural object by artist Mafalda Melim. While the sleevenotes indicate a concern with the dual themes of "static movement and mental illness" , the listener's experience of the music is openended – even palate cleansing. To be blunt, *Narrow* is a tape for those who like their noise uncut and harsh as fuck.

Ourobonic Plague
Stepping It Lightly Towards The Abyss
Bandcamp DL
As Ourobonic Plague, Australian producer Nick Sweepah sculpts grim yet energetic music tailormade for a rave in a Borgesian, infinitely unfolding labyrinth. *Stepping it Lightly Towards The Abyss* is an amped-up exercise in dark drum 'n' bass poised to anchor an eternal afterhours dance party hosted by ghouls. Song titles conjure occult concepts like that of the egregore, a transmundane entity that arises through collective thought. The closing "LONG TRIP (movement mix)" is a DJ-friendly recap of the album's 180 bpm bangers, while the two bonus tracks sidestep beats in favour of wind howling through the catacombs ambience.

Patriarchy
Unself
Dero Arcade DL/LP
Patriarchy is the musical project of film maker/performance artist/occasional porn star Actually Huizenga, previously of Hard Place and Wet Look. *Unself* is an album of sophisticated synthwork and flawless art-pop vocals – it's what Alison Goldfrapp might sound like if she had been raised in Los Angeles in the 1990s by a *Playboy* playmate and Charlie Sheen's personal physician. The lyrical themes explored here range from the flirty to the demanding; the romantic to the scientific. Released on limited edition "cum-splattered" vinyl, *Unself* is an album best enjoyed with the one(s) you love.

Solypsis
Crisis Fatigue
Chthonic Streams DL/MC
The scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore once remarked that the continued existence of capitalism depends on the system constantly going into crisis mode: "We cannot have capitalism without capitalism saving us from capitalism." The latest from power noise artist James Miller's Solypsis project embodies this endless cycle, from the hammering intensity of "Enabler" to the digital lacerations of "Dehydration Marks". Miller hails from Superior, Arizona, a mining region with a genocidal history of extractivism. This history surfaces on "Mineshaft", a beat-driven descent into the wounds of Planet Earth. ☐

Size Matters by Byron Coley

Marcia Bassett
Undulating Akrasboning
Artsy MC
New York artist and musician Marcia Bassett's recent turn towards the synthesizer has really given her work some new dimensions. This tape sounds like it uses guitar and voice in addition to synth, but it's not easy to tell. She still has a dab hand with long tones, but her use of squiggly Buchla lines allows her to disrupt sound fields in ways that are quite satisfying, all while luxuriating in the humorous feel inherent in some of the modes and tones she chooses. This turn towards experimenting with music reminiscent of analogue-era Northern European pioneers is not something I would have predicted, but it sure sounds nice as hell.

Bone & Joint Center
They Went Over The Mountain
Ramshackle Party Brothers MC
A second release by this Albany duo, made up of Jackson Wingate and Sick Llana (most recently of Burnt Hills). As with their debut LP, this is a smoke drenched tangle of guitar strings that gets nowhere fast, and then dangles its toes in the slow swirling chaos. Since the days of ERL, Wingate has been a master of stone-ass post-formalism. Listeners who demand structure (squares, cops, etc) may have a rough time getting a handle on this. The rest of us know it's all about just surrendering to the flow.

Chris Cundy
(You Danced With) Grey Daggers
Stoned To Death 7"
The Mond
Future Trash
Stoned To Death 7"
Jon Collin
Two Dream Sequences April, 2021
Stoned To Death 7"
Dire Wolves
On A Clear Drop You Can See Forever
Stoned To Death 7"
Nice eclectic batch of 7"s from a Czech label I'd heard of but never been able to find. Cundy is a British bass clarinet player with a deep resumé in all forms of music. His two solo pieces here are both fairly contained reflections with a compositional feel that puts me in mind of Steve Lacy on the A side and Anthony Braxton on the flip. The Mond are a Czech based international trio whose use of trumpet inside an electronic free rock framework runs on exciting parallel tracks to Chicago's superb Mako Sica (albeit with more babble). Stockholm based musician Jon Collin proffers a pair of Cageian duets for luminous guitar and environment, allowing the noises seeping into his apartment full artistic autonomy. Jeffrey Alexander's band Dire Wolves have been subjected to various dislocations during the past years, but they still managed to wrangle up some beautiful pure psych instrumental weeviling for our thirsty ears.

Final Conflict
1985 Demo
No Idols MC
Many bands have gone out under the name Final Conflict – this one's a hardcore group from Long Beach, California. I've heard them compared to San Francisco's Crucifix, but they don't really have the same kind of Discharge damaged vocals. The cleanliness of their rhythm speed definitely has a California/UK edge, but the vocals have an enunciation I associate more with the Midwest and East Coast, so in a sense they have it all! The mix of a very fast rhythm section with slower guitar must be a later period hardcore construction, but it really works well.

Foley/Amundsen Duo
Is There Really Such A Thing As Hypnosis?
No label 7"
Same guys who work as Minneapolis's Atomic Energy Commission are back with a new single so densely packed it sounds like two records playing at once. Hyperactive echoed/spoken vocals are set against a roaring backdrop of guitar amp huzz and layers of reverb. I keep thinking I've heard something like this before, but can never quite put my finger on it. Perhaps it was just a trip I took once.

Susan Geaney
Tape Melt
Fort Evil Fruit MC
Great second tape from Irish composer Susan Geaney, who has a wonderful way of handling long tone music. This piece is based on sounds she remembers from recording and rerecording music on VHS tapes, which would degrade in a way that caused the sound itself to "melt". Using string recordings by Kirkos Ensemble, reeds from FluteXpansions, and three cassette recorders, she has whipped up a hugely satisfying chunk of drooling aural pleasure. It's difficult to pick out the voices of the original instruments, but the results move around your head like a slow magma halo.

Holding Hands
Social Butterfly
33Jazz MC
Debut released by this UK octet co-led by trumpeter Chris Dowding and saxophonist Rob Milne. The title piece features a sample of Noam Chomsky describing his wife as a social butterfly, which is so loaded with possible meanings I'll just ignore it for the moment. The musical setting for this one reminds me of some of the new Finnish stuff I've heard – quiet, multi-lined arrangements, mostly all moving in one direction, highlighted by vibes. It has something of an early 1980s ECM vibe, which means it sounds a bit more smart than smooth. And the tribute to Juhani Aaltonen is spot on, referencing his work from the 90s onward I'd presume.

Kyle Jessen
Solo Horn
Soundholes MC
Chik White
Solo Horn
Soundholes MC
Got a batch of fine new releases on the Soundholes label. Can't handle them all, but here are a couple. Kyle Jessen is a sax player from Omaha, Nebraska. The six solo pieces on his tape have a very sweet way of blending edge-acridity with non-blaring melodicism. I am reminded a bit of Jon Raskin's playing in the way Jessen's technique combines American and European approaches to unaccompanied wind. The tape by Canadian Chik White is quite different from his standard jaw harp recordings. For this one he uses a toy trumpet. When he'd mentioned this project to me he described it as slobbery, which I think is fairly apt. There is a lot of machine racket going on as well, so I assume the recordings were altered, but the basics are wetly blown into a child's tooting toy. The first side ends up having a very ominous industrial surface with harsh textures rubbing your eardrums like sandy suntan lotion. The flip sounds more like slide whistle improvs, with a decidedly avian quality. If I were playing this near an open window, I bet a clutch of birds would soon be sitting around looking for an angry fix. After a bit, the tweetery dissolves into something akin to an essay on gum disease presented as a musical.

Ludmilla Nunes & Tim Gick
Songs For Theremin & Saxophone
Workingman Lay Down MC
These two artists are associated with the Crazy Doberman cabal, although they are also said to be based in the New Mexico city of Truth Or Consequences. Not always easy to separate fantasy from reality with this crew, but let's take the info at face value. Because this certainly does appear to be duets for sax and theremin. And it sounds great! You rarely hear the theremin played in an ostensible free jazz context, but once you have you'll wonder why people haven't been doing it since the dawn of time. The mutability of its voice is a perfect companion/goad for sax squall, and these two go at it like battle-hardened super apes. ☐

Send cassettes, 7"s, 10"s, etc for possible inclusion in Size Matters to: Byron Coley, PO Box 627, Northampton, MA 01062, US

The Boomerang

New reissues and archive releases

Brian Auger, Julie Driscoll & The Trinity
Far Horizons
Soul Bank DL/5×LP

After being turned on to the Hammond organ by Jimmy Smith records in the early 1960s, keyboardist Brian Auger emerged as an ace face in mid-60s Swinging London. His trio Trinity released a handful of singles – highly amphetamised covers of R&B classics such as Booker T & The MGs' "Green Onions" – before being poached wholesale to form the backline of vocalist Long John Baldry's R&B revue Steampacket alongside singers Rod Stewart and Julie Driscoll.

After a couple of years, Auger ducked out and formed a brand new version of Trinity – a quartet featuring guitarist Gary Boyle, later of Brit fusion outfit Isotope – and set about forging an accessible mix of jazz, R&B, soul and pop. The four albums in this box set – *Open* (1967), *Definitely What!* (1968), *Streetnoise* (1969) and *Befour* (1970) – reveal what a rich seam he mined.

There are still plenty of the kind of instrumental mod stompers with which Auger originally made his name, and tracks like his insanely upbeat rendering of Booker T's "Red Beans & Rice" explode with dazzling Hammond pyrotechnics, securing his place as an acid jazz ambassador. He delves deeper into jazz too, with both Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" and Miles Davis's "All Blues" (for which he switches to piano) getting sensitive readings. As he tipped into the later 60s, he also picked up on the progressive sounds of the moment – "Tropic Of Capricorn" echoes the bombast of The Nice's take on Leonard Bernstein's "America", while a swinging romp through French composer Gabriel Faure's 19th century piano piece "Pavane" could be a lost track by Canterbury trio Egg.

But it's always going to be his collaborations with Julie Driscoll (now Julie Tippetts, see *The Wire* 460 for an in-depth review of *Illusion*, her ambitious recent collaboration with Discus Records founder and multi-instrumentalist Martin Archer) and particularly their reimaginings of contemporaneous pop tunes for which he remains best known. Donovan's "Season Of The Witch" is stretched out to an eight minute psychedelic epic, with Driscoll both sultry and strident, Auger's Hammond solo an exercise in slow-burning restraint.

The otherwise corny "Flesh Failures (Let The Sunshine In)" from the musical *Hair* has an irresistible sunburst groove, propelling Driscoll into passionate exhortations. If you want the real queen of 60s blue eyed UK soul, look no further – she craps all over Dusty Springfield.

Daniel Spicer

Bergisch-Brandenburgisches Quartett
Live '82
Black Truffle DL/LP

The four seasoned improvisors who formed the Bergisch-Brandenburgisches Quartett in 1980 were all affiliated to Free Music Production, the Berlin based label established by Jost Gebers and Peter Brötzmann, known for its radical edge and uncompromising intensity. Swedish percussionist Sven-Åke Johansson was indeed a member of the ferocious Brötzmann octet that recorded *Machine Gun* in 1968.

At Moers Festival in 1982, he is heard in this very different collaborative context with saxophonist and accordion player Rüdiger Carl, guitarist and instrument-maker Hans Reichel and, from the far side of the Berlin Wall, alto saxophonist Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky. The formation of a group that straddled the East-West German divide was rare at that time, and politically significant. More generally, the flexibility with which participants in the relatively unregulated musical field of free improvisation move from one context to another, adapting to the challenge while somehow maintaining the distinctiveness of their own individual voices, is one of its most intriguing aspects.

On this occasion, Reichel's idiosyncratically spidery and metallic playing persistently tilts the quartet away from recognisable trajectories, prompting Carl, Petrowsky and the consummately adaptable Johansson to find fresh ways to fuel collective momentum, and to discover alternative modes of coherence. The outcome is kaleidoscopic and playful; a volatile montage of collisions and correspondences, allusive, at times parodic, weaving to and fro across idiomatic boundaries while revelling in serendipitous coincidence. The horns still channel intermittent echoes of Albert Ayler, John Coltrane and late 1960s European free jazz, but the spirit that animates this quartet seems closer to the unpredictable flux, patchwork inclusiveness and ironic humour that characterised the wildly entertaining concerts of the British quartet Alterations during the early 80s.

This quartet also pick up or discard instruments as required. Reichel switches from guitar to violin. Johansson produces an accordion to join Carl in a duet. Carl wields a Brazilian friction drum. Petrowsky introduces flowing flute lines. Moment to moment the situation changes. It's easy to envisage the Moers audience perched on the edge of their seats, tense with anticipation, yet primed to laugh along with sporadic onstage shenanigans and spontaneous musical jokes.

Julian Cowley

David Blue
Stories
Eremite/Sister Rose LP

Stories is a song cycle steeped in alienation and palpable longing, performed with elegant intimacy. It boasts string arrangements by Jack Nitzsche and backing players including Ry Cooder and Rita Coolidge. And when it was released on Asylum in 1971, it barely sold at all. Now Eremite has created a subsidiary label solely for American loner singer-songwriter David Blue's gospel, ushering it back into the world with the care of a late night love letter. In addition to the faithfully recreated original package, there's a screenprinted insert with an image of the musician with Leonard Cohen and the text of Cohen's breathtaking eulogy for Blue, written upon his untimely death in 1982.

"Looking For A Friend" sets the tone for what is to follow. As the songs go on, the desire for connection is ever present, only to be thwarted by betrayal, self-sabotage, or simple circumstance. "House Of Changing Faces" is something of a centrepiece, a six minute drama of psychic collapse that portrays a strung-out life in many shades of nihilistic grey. When Blue speaks of the days when he *"wanted to die"* we have to question the use of the past tense. Its subject matter is echoed in "Come On John" which, though it stomps musically, says of its subject, *"You wanted to die but what's the use?"*. Turning directly to the listener, Blue declares, *"He says he can't take it/Then he takes it every day"*. "Marianne" relays the story of an affair with a squeezebox sadness adorning its sweet riverboat melody. Tellingly, the woman in the song is more than just a lover, she's a friend as well – the inverse of the woman in the first song. She has helped the narrator, and he feels grateful.

And still the album is no mere diary of difficulty. The delicacy of the performances and trustworthy vulnerability of Blue's vocal delivery invest the record with hard-won radiance. It holds its desolation so securely that something transcendent emerges. Bummers are a dime a dozen, but this is something else.

Matt Krefting

Bound For Hell: On The Sunset Strip
Various
Numero Group CD/DL/2×LP+Hbk+MC

I've always thought that including a pull quote from a label's press release in an album review is tacky and unprofessional, but I'd be remiss in not mentioning record label Numero Group's on the nose description of this enjoyable compilation of Sunset Strip-era hard rock, heavy metal and punk: "*Bound For Hell* is early 1980s LA rock as it actually was: a California cataclysm of drunk and horny headbangers, dressed in sharp, shiny, leather androgyny and fire, kicking crowds in the teeth to clear the way to that one big shot."

The curation of bands for this compilation (the vinyl plus bonus cassette version also comes with a 144 page book featuring interviews and recollections from the artists involved) will be familiar to middle aged heshers – Lizzy Borden, Black 'N Blue, Odin, Armored Saint and Leather Angel – but Numero's inclusion of obscure single tracks and rarities is both a delight to listen to and strangely informative. The selected tracks are foundational to the sun-baked and alcohol-drenched cock rock that was peddled by bands like Mötley Crüe, Poison, Warrant and Dokken.

"Bound For Hell" by Max Havoc (who once featured members from Quiet Riot and WASP) is nicely influenced by Led Zeppelin with a bottom-heavy rhythm section, reminiscent of the latter's drummer John Bonham, as well as incorporating a harmonica riff similar to the one on "When The Levee Breaks". Stormer's "Going To The City" recalls 70s Kiss, with emphasis placed on the groovy bassline, but the best bit is the harmonisation within the catchy chorus. Sin's "On The Run" begins with spacy keyboards and some thunderous sound effects, but quickly transitions into something resembling Mötley Crüe circa 1983's *Shout At The Devil* with a dash of street-punk attitude.

Comparisons aside, *Bound For Hell* sonically traces how the intersection of punk, hard rock and heavy metal created not just an interesting musical mix, but also how these genres created a scene that, whether you like it or not, exerted a huge influence on US popular culture. The music hasn't faded; thank goodness the same can't be said of the era's fashions.

Laina Dawes

Can
Live In Cuxhaven 1976
Spoon/Mute CD/DL/LP

Can's studio records benefitted enormously from bassist/engineer/editor Holger Czukay's talent for distillation. While the group's concerts were legendary for their feats of spontaneous composition, at no point during their existence did they release a live record. A live double set appeared in 1999, and since 2021, after all save one member of the core quartet had died, Can have been releasing live documents drawn from the archives of audience taper Andy Hall.

Live In Cuxhaven 1976 flips the script

proposed by *Live In Brighton 1975* and *Live In Stuttgart 1975*. The first two volumes played out over the course of three LPs or two CDs apiece, which was not enough to hold entire concerts, but did afford listeners the opportunity to hear how Czukay, keyboardist Irmin Schmidt, drummer Jaki Liebezeit and guitarist Michael Karoli negotiated the music's development over the course of long elastic jams. Sometimes their improvisations morphed from one fragment of an existing song to another; at other times, they came up with something new.

The latest installment, on the other hand, cuts to the chase. Excerpted from the group's first concert of 1976, it clocks in at just under half an hour. This gambit can be interpreted as tacit recognition that those jams, while educational for listeners who want to know how Can functioned in concert, might try the patience of the merely curious.

The segments selected also shift scrutiny to another member's contributions. Brighton and Stuttgart both reveal how Liebezeit's dynamic grooves shaped and steered the music, and Schmidt's instincts for harmony and pure sound gave it coherence. This record is Karoli's show.

On "Cuxhaven 76 Eins" (the set continues its predecessors' practice of numbering rather than naming tracks), his funky comping lures the band out of a bowl of noodling and right up to the edge to future hit single "I Want More", which they had not yet recorded. During the second segment, his sustained tones give lyrical focus to a vamp on "Bel Air", just as his incendiary extrapolations set a match to "Dizzy Dizzy" on "Cuxhaven 76 Drei". The final section plays out like a duel between Karoli's fuzztone blues and Schmidt's springy sound effects.

Live In Cuxhaven 1976 may not dispel the impression that these live records are mainly for Can devotees, but it also confirms that the last word about their volatile processes has yet to be said.

Bill Meyer

Cheval De Frise
Cheval De Frise
Computer Students CD/DL/LP/MC

With the benefit of hindsight, the two albums of music that Bordeaux's Cheval De Frise recorded during their few years of existence around the turn of the millennium feel both in step with the musical fashions of the time yet somehow distinct. A two-piece comprised of Vincent Beysselance on drums and Thomas Bonvalet on amplified classical guitar, their spry, complex music bears surface comparison to the knotty math rock of Don Caballero, or the supercharged prog of the Japanese duo Ruins. But their debut album – first released on the French label Sonore in 2000 – feels like very much its own beast.

Wholly instrumental, ferociously complex, tracks like "Constructions D'Écorces D'Arbres" and "Lundi Deux Mars" balance startling virtuosity with a quicksilver unpredictability. Their music is athletic and dynamically on edge, full of pregnant pauses that suddenly give way to spasmodic scurrying motion. Are they improvising or is this composed? It's never quite clear, but the shifts can be vertiginous. One second a track like "Connexion Monstrueuse Entre Un Objet Et Son Image" brings to mind Slint's *Spiderland* accidentally played at 45 rpm; the next, it's catapulted itself into a paroxym of heroic shredding, or suddenly finds Beysselance and Bonvalet in total mindmeld, locking into an alien time signature that's already recomposed itself before you can fully discern its form.

A cheval de frise was a medieval battlefield device, a sort of proto barbed wire used to repel or skewer attacking cavalry. That image certainly captures something of this music's spiky brutality. But there's a quixotic prettiness to *Cheval De Frise* that elevates it beyond show-off virtuosity, something that no band has quite captured since. New York label Computer Students presents the album fully remastered and presented across two discs of 45 rpm vinyl in an aluminium heat-sealed sleeve.

Louis Pattison

Dead Kennedys
Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables: 2022 Mix
Cherry Red DL/LP

This retooling of Dead Kennedys' finest moment is not without controversy. Jello Biafra isn't happy – he's written a typically entertaining screed about this mix (check the Alternative Tentacles site) in which he claims he was entirely shut out of the process (East Bay Ray and Klaus Flouride unilaterally went back to the original multitracks with uber-producer Chris Lord-Alge and beefed up the sound), and further suggests a true remix project including Al Jourgensen or new hiphop producers would have been far more interesting.

But Biafra is being unnecessarily churlish about his lack of involvement – to these ears this is as good as *Fresh Fruit* is gonna get. The guitars are sharpened, the bass and drums warmed into a more satisfying thunk, and everything seems to have been given more contrast and clarity. When "Kill The Poor" comes snarling out, it's impossible not to go back and listen to your old copy to contrast and compare: against the US pressings online it's far superior – at times it's even preferable to the early UK version (itself superior to the US version). Check the lacerating crossfire of "Drug Me" and "Your Emotions", and dig the way this remix brings out the details as well – East Bay's weird Beefheartisms on "Funland At The Beach" and the full fat sped-up Sabbath riffola of "Stealing People's Mail". Even the slightly pisstakey closing version of "Viva Las Vegas" is given a new lease of life here, twanging with the mania of Meat Puppets, the snark and sneer slathered so thick you feel your face forming a permanent scowl.

A masterpiece of a record in whatever iteration you hear it, but if you're getting a neophyte into Dead Kennedys this remix is a great starting place.

Neil Kulkarni

Arnold Dreyblatt & Paul Panhuysen
Duo Geloso
Black Truffle DL/LP

Number Paul Panhuysen's Het Apollohuis among the things that were too good for this world. Between 1980–87, it funnelled Dutch governmental funding into a space that supported sound and intermedia artists from around the world, hosting performances and residencies by Pascal Comelade, Jim O'Rourke, Phill Niblock and Derek Bailey, among others.

While it was ultimately shut down by bean counters who deemed its advocacy to be insufficiently parochial, Panhuysen himself directly benefitted from its booking policy, because he sometimes got to work with his guests. He and expatriate US minimalist Arnold Dreyblatt hit it off, forming a combo that toured around Europe in 1987–88. Documentation of their collaboration has been sparsely dispersed through Dreyblatt's discography; this LP, named after their duo, is the first record dedicated to their partnership.

In some ways, they're an odd pairing. While both came to sound from a visual background, it would be fair to characterise Dreyblatt as a very intentional composer and musician. Panhuysen, on the other hand, liked to devise systems and settings, and find out what they would do. Their partnership could be purely additive, as on "Synsonic Batterie", where Panhuysen's toy syndrums provide a suitably bouncy platform for Dreyblatt to overlay his trademarked excited strings groove.

But the two clearly bonded over their shared appreciation for the lively sounds of unconventionally tuned strings. "High Life", which will be familiar to owners of Dreyblatt's *Propellers In Love* CD and *Second Selection* LP, is distilled here into a ten minute meditation of the mutually disruptive qualities of closely matched drones. And the aura of overtones generated by mechanically stroked strings on "The Louisiana Purchase" positively glows.

Elsewhere, the music packs a rocking punch. "Razorburg" may have been produced by slow passes of an E-bow and some motorised string agitators over a guitar and bass, but its stuttering attack sounds like a defaced surf music CD, locked forever in that moment when the wave starts to curl. And on the flip side are two tracks that sound like someone did a similar freeze job on some Rhys Chatham guitar breaks. As is often the case with the best minimalist music, the closer you listen, the more you hear.

Bill Meyer

Gnawa Music Of Marrakesh
Night Spirit Masters
Zehra DL/LP

The Gnawa culture stems from descendants of slaves bought to Maghreb during the Arab trade in sub-Saharan Africa between the eighth and 19th centuries, with cults linked to Sahelian animist rituals. Ritualistic sound is what Gnawa music is all about – if you were smart enough to have picked up on the stunning recent LP by guembri player Moktar Gania, you'll have already developed a taste for its heavy hypnotic feel and this remastered vinyl reissue of a 1990 LP of Gnawa musicians – produced and collated by Bill Laswell and Richard Horowitz – brings another dose of that fiery, mesmeric sound.

The Moroccan Gnawa are an ethnic minority in that country, bought to Morocco in the 16th century, rapidly converted to Islam but retaining memories and musical remnants of animistic cults. Before Laswell recorded the artists here for his Axiom label, recordings of Gnawa music (some conducted by author Paul Bowles, who provided sleevenotes here) were strictly ethnographic field recordings. Laswell not only ups the recording quality but also produces this record as a real showcase of Gnawa talent, recorded atmospherically in the Medina of Marrakesh. It's gloriously bottom heavy stuff, basslines locked in from the off and going nowhere vast, little metal clappers, drums and voices swimming in and out of the mix to ramp up both the hypnosis and the strange sense of ancient funk.

What's great about Laswell's mix is that he's confident enough in this music to let tracks that are purely percussive, or purely melodic, sit among those that blend the two. Consequently, the cumulative effect of the album is a little beyond even his control, a destabilising build of ceremony and magic.

Neil Kulkarni

Këkht Aräkh
Night And Love
Sacred Bones CD/DL/LP/MC
Pale Swordsman
Sacred Bones CD/DL/LP/MC

Black metal can, by and large, be hostile territory for crossover artists, a genre in which deviation from the true and kult ways is generally greeted with mockery or disdain. This is the dangerous ground trodden by Ukrainian one-man group Këkht Aräkh. Active since 2018, the project's two albums to date – 2018's *Night And Love* and last year's *Pale Swordsman* – have been picked up for wider release by New York's purveyors of modern gothic sounds, Sacred Bones.

To be fair, Këkht Aräkh pays more than lip service to black metal's historical

Leo Castelli (left), Dickie Landry, Richard Peck, Robert Prado, Rusty Gilder, Jon Smith, Alan Braufman, David Lee in New York, 1972

The forms sculpted by composer, saxophonist and visual artist **Dickie Landry** in 1970s New York rematerialise via three reissues. By **Julian Cowley**

Dickie Landry
Solos
Unseen Worlds DL/2×LP
4 Cuts Placed In "A First Quarter"
Unseen Worlds DL/LP
Lawrence Weiner & Dickie Landry
Having Been Built On Sand
Unseen Worlds DL/LP

During the closing years of the 1960s, New York's febrile climate of experimentation and innovation in the arts persuaded saxophonist Richard Landry to uproot from rural Louisiana and head for Manhattan. His social circle soon came to include Richard Serra, Joan Jonas, Gordon Matta-Clark, Keith Sonnier and numerous other artists who were busily redefining what sculpture and painting might be. Landry took up photography and started to document the scene. At the same time he became a core member of the ensemble that Philip Glass had formed to develop and perform his own music.

Dickie Landry's loft, on Chatham Square, became a meeting place and rehearsal space. Its location lent its name to the record label that Glass set up in 1971. *Solos* and *4 Cuts Placed In "A First Quarter"* were issued initially by Chatham Square. Tom Johnson, writing in *The Village Voice* in November 1974, remarked that he had heard both, "and none of the music seems really to belong on disc". He was not dismissing Landry's music, but suggesting that vinyl was not its proper context.

Solos presents excerpts from a five hour free jazz jam session. *4 Cuts* features diverse pieces Landry provided for the soundtrack to artist Lawrence Weiner's film *A First Quarter*. Both contrast starkly in character to the meticulous precision of Glass's *Music With Changing Parts*, which had launched his label, or *Visitations*, a multitracked environmental soundscape that Jon Gibson, another regular saxophonist in Glass's group, had concocted for release on Chatham Square the previous year.

Perhaps Landry was signalling his liking for spontaneity and active engagement, his distaste for archives of recorded artefacts. Despite his reputation as a virtuoso, and his appearance in credits to albums by the likes of Talking Heads and Laurie Anderson, Landry's own discography remains astonishingly slight. His most widely heard solo recording, *Fifteen Saxophones*, reissued by Unseen Worlds in 2011, was released in 1977 on Werner Goldschmidt's Wergo label, where Landry's preference for the informality of the name Dickie strikes an amiably incongruous note in a catalogue populated by avant garde icons such as Stockhausen, Nono and Ligeti.

Solos, closer in spirit to John Coltrane, Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman, is entirely improvised and bracingly ramshackle. The session took place at the Leo Castelli Gallery in February 1972. Apart from Brooklyn born alto saxophonist Alan Braufman, the musicians convened for the occasion had all grown up in Louisiana. Especially noteworthy is David Lee, at that time drummer of choice for Sonny Rollins. His rhythmic discipline and unflagging drive provide a necessary axis around which the free-blowing instrumental voices can find their bearings.

Landry, it should be said, doesn't see himself as a jazz musician. Rusty Gilder and Robert Prado, who both double on bass and trumpet, and reed players Jon Smith and Richard Peck, all passed through the ranks of the Glass ensemble, with its particular demands and constraints. The challenge of taping the unpredictable ebb and flow of *Solos* was met by sound engineer Kurt Munkacsi, another Glass associate. In 1972 he was also working with John Lennon, whose mobile studio he borrowed to make this recording, which bears no resemblance at all to the music of Glass.

Lawrence Weiner grew up in New York noticing graffiti. Incitements to action scrawled on buildings later steered him towards use of language as sculptural material. His gnomic, resonant phrases have appeared in galleries and public spaces across the world, situated like objects to elicit an undefined response. A selection of these verbal objects were placed in the mouths of the four actors who appear in *A First Quarter*, which Weiner spoke of as his "Godard movie". He invited Landry to supply a soundtrack. Landry responded with a selection of previously realised pieces, already recorded by Munkacsi.

"Requiem For Some" required performers simply to play long tones. Two saxophones, trumpet and bowed bass oblige while David Lee sizzles at his kit. Lasting less than six minutes, it's closer to chamber jazz than minimalism. "4th Register" finds Landry on tenor, echoey with delay, working towards a stratospheric squeal, while using for his improbable scaffolding "Bless 'Em All", a 1917 British barrack room tune. Following "Piece For So", a solo bass showcase for Rusty Gilder, this divertingly strange album closes with "Vivace Duo", a lively tenor squabble between Landry and Richard Peck.

As a sideline to his art, Weiner ventured into writing songs, notably with Ned Sublette, but *Having Been Built On Sand*, his collaboration with Landry, is more closely aligned to his verbal sculptures. Originally issued by a Munich gallery, it was made in the reverberant space of painter Robert Rauschenberg's Manhattan studio. English and German words are spoken flatly by Weiner, performance artist Tina Girouard and photographer Britta Le Va, wandering though the space. Using various reed instruments Landry provides sonic textures across which the words are positioned, as they might be across brick or plaster if written. The music he improvised for this intriguing project clearly assumes the status of sculptural material. Maybe all three of these reissues should be heard as innovative sculpted forms rather than routine musical documentation. ☐

Courtesy Unseen Worlds

touchstones. With its broiling kickdrum clatter and funereal howls, a track like *Night And Love*'s "Den Venstre Hånd På Den Høyre" harks back to the frostbitten rush of 1990s Norwegian black metal as popularised by groups like Darkthrone and Immortal. To this root sound, though, Këkht Aräkh brings a certain romantic sensibility, framed by delicate melancholia (Këkht Aräkh's sole member goes by the pseudonym Crying Orc, which gives you a sense of the tone his music strikes).

Sometimes this is achieved through compositional tricks: a lo-fidelity gauze that brings a sense of textual soft focus, or a deceptively graceful guitar or synth line that lends an otherwise rocking track like "Elegy For The Memory Of Me" a soft centre. Elsewhere, though, Këkht Aräkh adds interludes that give a sense of ebb and flow. See the gentle classical guitar that concludes *Night And Love*'s "Her Body Strewn With Petals Black", or *Pale Swordsman*'s closing "Swordsman", a delicate piano elegy that sees Crying Orc's hoarse croak replaced by clean sung vocals.

It's an approach that, if overdone, could be cloying. But so far at least, Këkht Aräkh gets the balance right: a sliver of warmth piercing black metal's icy heart, but not enough to bring about a thaw.

Louis Pattison

Main Source

Breaking Atoms

Mr Bongo CD/DL/LP

Breaking Atoms, the only album the Queens group Main Source released during their brief existence, marked a transition between the funky, pro-Black consciousness of late 1980s New York hiphop and the street themes, soul jazz licks and merciless punchlines that soon defined early 90s hardcore. These may seem minor distinctions, even to the trained ear, but one epochal number makes them clear. On the furious cipher "Live At The Barbecue", teenage guest Nas kicks off with one of the most famous lines in the genre's history: *"When I was 12, I went to hell for snuffing Jesus"*.

Nas's subsequent ascent to Mount Rushmore status has overshadowed Main Source's imaginative and frequently brilliant LP. So did a messy fallout between rapper/producer Large Professor and brothers, Canadian émigrés and DJ/producers Sir Scratch and DJ K-Cut. After the trio followed up *Breaking Atoms* with the memorable US rap hit "Fakin' The Funk", Large Pro split. Later, he used a guest appearance on A Tribe Called Quest's "8 Million Stories" to scowl, *"Fuck them two DJs"* (judging from social media posts, the trio have mended fences). The brothers tried to carry on with Mikey D from little-known group Mikey D & The LA Posse, but split up before second album *Fuck What You Think* hit the stores (it was officially issued in 1998). Meanwhile, Large Professor became an architect of golden era hiphop – leading fans to mistakenly think he produced *Breaking Atoms* album by himself when the DJs say it was a collaboration – yet never quite experienced mainstream success. All this drama lends the album a wistful quality, and a yearning for what may have been.

Large Professor has an unvarnished, thrillingly direct style and a knack for incredible lines. On the hip house classic "Looking At The Front Door", he unpacks a toxic relationship *"with a girl who's shootin' up his world like Shaft"*. He weaves a pungent metaphor for police violence with "Just A Friendly Game Of Baseball", and calls out pop rappers who dominate the charts on "Vamos A Rapiar": *"It ain't hard to tell that your records sell because your rhymes smell and people scared of a brother that drops a bombshell"*. Amid wonderful loops of Sister Nancy, Gwen McCrae and Lou Donaldson, Main Source offer topical beatdowns like "Snake Eyes" and "Peace Is Not The Word To Play", the latter a spiritual heir to Nick Lowe's "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love And Understanding". Large Pro may not have the literary wit of Lowe, or the song's definitive interpreter Elvis Costello, but he's similarly a world-weary cynic with a bleeding heart.

Mosi Reeves

Pavement

Westing (By Musket And Sextant)

Matador CD/DL/LP

Slanted & Enchanted

Matador DL/LP

Courting Shutdown Offers

Matador MC

In a recent episode of Matador's *Revisionist History* podcast Stephen Malkmus and Scott Kannberg discussed the early days of Pavement. "I was going to write some real songs," says Malkmus, "I also liked Camper Van Beethoven and Velvet Undergound… we obviously mixed it pretty heavily with The Fall." While the pair describe eclectic musical tastes at that time, it's their obsession with this nation's saving grace that is the most intriguing. While it shouldn't be overstated, these reissues demonstrate that influence at its most pronounced.

Though originally released in 1993, *Westing (By Musket And Sextant)* gathers together the band's first three EPs: 1989's *Slay Tracks (1933–1969)*, 1990's *Demolition Plot J-7* and *Perfect Sound Forever* from 1991. On "You're Killing Me", lo-fi lyrics are matched by lo-fi sound; the production of Gary Young – who later joined Malkmus and Kannberg as the band's permanent drummer – is rough and raw, dragging the vocals through sludgy guitar grooves. However, as tape hiss swallows Malkmus's *"You're killing me/ You're killing me again"*, it's the sound rather than the narrative that recalls the grotesqueness of The Fall, the lyrics opting for brutal simplicity rather than obscure gothic surrealism.

Courting Shutdown Offers is a tape the band sent to prospective record labels. It contained early versions of tracks that would eventually comprise debut *Slanted & Enchanted*, and Matador has repressed a replica included with the *Westing* reissue. From within leader tape silence, Malkmus yelps *"One, two, three, four"* and the band fly into the weird atonal racket of "Chesley's Lil' Wrists", which capitulates into garbled vocals and drum splatter. It's thrillingly ramshackle and while there's an obvious thread back to The Fall, its atonal grind is equally redolent of Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr.

If Pavement's *Slanted & Enchanted* contains the most overt Fall influence – "Two States" for example could live anywhere on 1979's *Dragnet* – it also illustrates the band channelling the pure energy of *Courting Shutdown Offers* into a voice uniquely their own. "Trigger Cut/ Wounded-Kite At: 17" rumbles with a raw freneticism which suggests imminent collapse, while "In The Mouth A Desert" stacks buzzsaw guitar around Malkmus's melancholic yelps, pulling listless Californian ennui from within the tumult.

Where The Fall find off-kilter malevolence in their disjointed sound, Pavement extract a kind of spaced out surrealism, replacing that malevolence with precision packets of bittersweet and atonal pop. These reissues remind just how viscerally exciting they were at this time, particularly the hulking rumble of *Courting Shutdown Offers*. Listening now to those songs sent out to secure their debut release, it's hard to imagine how any label could have declined.

Spenser Tomson

Prolapse

Pointless Walks To Dismal Places

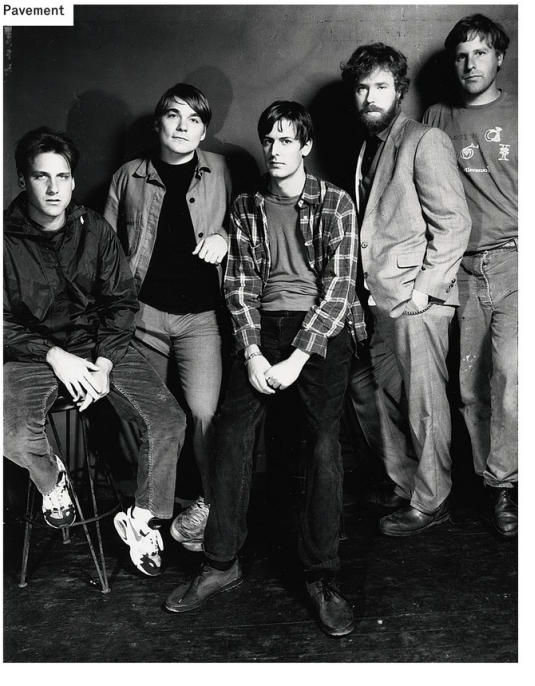
Optic Nerve 2×LP

It wasn't just their choice of name that alienated Prolapse from the Britpop movement which ran roughly concurrently with their first flush of records in the mid-1990s. A motley band of archaeology and drama students from Leicester Polytechnic that formed with the stated intention of being "the most depressing band ever", their acerbic, oblique music found its natural home in the middle reaches of John Peel's Festive 50.

Perhaps it's this distance from the 90s zeitgeist that has ensured Prolapse's debut album – released in October 1994 – still feels fresh. Points of comparison include The Fall (their manic, obstreperous energy) or Stereolab (a taste for sleek, krauty repetition). But the heart of their music is the strange chemistry between their two vocalists, 'Scottish' Mick Derrick and Linda Steelyard. Both could have been lead singer in their own right, but on *Pointless Walks To Dismal Places* they're often crammed together on the same track as if to accentuate a feeling of claustrophobic discord. Him: cryptic, generally aggrieved, prone to spittle-flecked rants about Spanish football ("Surreal Madrid") or long-past British military campaigns ("Doorstep Rhythmic Bloc"). Her: sometimes shouty or sarcastic, but other times blank-eyed, clear as a bell, reciting lyrics that sound like surrealist cut-ups, or guided by the logic of a dream.

In line with Prolapse's generally obtuse and oppositional manner, Derrick

Pavement



and Steelyard seem to occupy different universes, and sometimes – as on the melancholy post-rock of "Burgundy Spine" – their vocals play out as if they're unaware of each other's existence, words cascading over and into words. In sharp contrast on album closer "Tina This Is Matthew Stone", a couple's slanging match is played out to a grinding riff that still sounds chilling in its vitriol 25 years on. This vinyl reissue adds an extra disc, collecting tracks from their first couple of EPs.

Louis Pattison

Tintern Abbey

Beeside: The Anthology

Real Gone 2×LP

Formed in 1967's Summer Of Love and named after Wordsworth's paean to the transcendent power of nature, Tintern Abbey were a somewhat mythical presence on London's countercultural music scene. The quartet spent a few months scratching around for gigs until they were adopted as a pet project by 21 year old hippy millionaire, Nigel Samuel. A financer of the underground newspaper *International Times*, Samuel had been casting about for a psychedelic band to plough some dough into and enthusiastically backed the group, kitting them out in Carnaby Street duds and paying for them to stay in a cottage in Cornwall for a month and write some material.

The result – and, until recently, the only available record of their existence – was their November 1967 single "Beeside". Luxuriating on gauzy clouds of mellotron, and propelled by a loping, bass-heavy groove and flanged drums, it's a dreamy evocation of an acid-drenched afternoon spent lazing in a bucolic idyll: *"Busy bee, buzzing all day long/What's the hurry?/ There's surely something wrong"*. B side "Vacuum Cleaner" is built on another heavy vamp, with sweet vocal harmonies and a mind-blown backwards guitar solo, is a suitably zoned love letter to hashish: *"Fix me up with your sweet dose/Now I'm feeling like a ghost"*. Inexplicably, the single failed to dent the charts but, undeterred, Samuel bankrolled a handful of recording sessions throughout 1968. During this time, they played in hip clubs in London with an idiosyncratic stage show incorporating a buzzard they'd found in Cornwall.

However, before an album could be released, the group split in February 1969 – and that's all anyone knew about Tintern Abbey until the fruits of those various studio dates surfaced on CD last year, here given a vinyl release for the first time. For connoisseurs of late 60s English psychedelia, there aren't many stylistic surprises: echoes of The Beatles circa "Rain"; some stomping freakbeat belters; the obligatory Lewis Carroll inspired whimsical Edwardiana. But, for those of us who have made it a mission to piece together every conceivable crumb of information about that far-off historical playground, it's a pretty enjoyable bag of nuggets.

Daniel Spicer

Max Tundra

Some Best Friend You Turned Out To Be

Domino DL/LP

Mastered By Guy At The Exchange

Domino DL/LP

Parallax Error Beheads You

Domino DL/LP

Remixtape

Domino DL

I first met Ben Jacobs aka Max Tundra 21 years ago. We met because I was going out with a girl called Sally and he was going out with her sister Jenny. Because the sisters lived together we used to see each other often. I remember visiting their flat in Stoke Newington; Tundra was there making music on a Commodore Amiga plugged into a TV.

Domino have delivered here with reissues of Tundra's first three albums plus a terrific album of remixes by some of his favourite artists as well the man himself. There's a rigorous optimism running throughout these albums yet it always seems underpinned by a slight sadness. Musically it's fizzy, busy, vivid. A kaleidoscopic fusion of just about any genre you care to mention. There is a strong strain of prog running throughout these albums like a blue vein; swift tempo and key switches, elaborate chord voicings, constant frenetic movement and rock solid riffs. Tundra's first album is purely instrumental but from his second album onwards there are vocals. When the lyrics are discernible their poetry becomes apparent.

"Lights" from *Mastered By Guy At The Exchange* juxtaposes the quotidian with the mystical. Tundra splices an account of working as a runner/delivery driver with direct discussion of being in a studio and how love is illuminating and hallucinatory: *"Only last week I noticed that the colours of the lights in my studio are the same as the ones you conjure in my mind"*. It's a mini masterpiece and there are many of them gathered across these three albums.

Apparently it's been 14 years since Tundra released a solo album. Considering that acceleration and speed, movement and rapid gear changes are quite prominent hallmarks of Tundra's compositional approach, it is ironic that the composition of the music has a slow gestation. Furthermore, this music is ostensibly pop but its dissemination as pop is also outside of pop biz time, eg the continuous rapid fire bombardment of new releases via all platforms. I presume that is because – and when listening to this music it is self-evident – that the compositions are highly considered pieces of music rich in detail. Quite ornate and therefore quite time consuming to construct. That's real dedication. Max Tundra means it.

Richard Thomas

Mal Waldron

Searching In Grenoble: The 1978 Solo Piano Concert

Tompkins Square 2×CD/DL

Like Kenny Drew, Mal Waldron left the US in the mid-1960s and based himself permanently in Europe, allotting time slots for touring activity in Japan, Germany, Norway, Scandinavia and France. The appearance in 1969 of *Free At Last* on ECM introduced a new, darkly rhythmic approach to improvisation, based on ostinati and minimalist melodic development. A catastrophic breakdown in 1963, heroin-induced, seemed to purge his musical personality of the lyricism that had made him such a brilliant accompanist, notably for Billie Holiday, replacing it with something starker.

If Bill Evans and Paul Bley are the two most influential figures in modern jazz piano – there is no school of Cecil Taylor – Waldron's new style represents another road not taken. Again, like Drew, his American reputation and potential influence was occluded by exile and he remains admired, even revered, but still not yet securely positioned in the historical narrative. This previously unissued live concert from March 1978, recorded for Radio France at Grenoble's Five Days Of Jazz, will surely clarify and reinforce his stylistic importance. The stately, slow chording of "Fire Waltz" owes something to Ravel's *Pavane Pour Une Infant Défunte*. Waldron unashamedly, even defiantly, referenced European locations and sources for his work. He often laughingly said of "The Seagulls Of Kristiansund" (not included on this set) that few Americans had a clue where he was talking about. Likewise here with "Mistral Breeze – Sieg Haile", the mischievously extended opening piece, "Petite Gémeaux" (or "Little Gems", a rare cluster of miniatures) or even "Russian Melody". Other European exiles and frequent visitors – Drew, Albert Ayler, Ted Curson – liked to stud their sets with native folk song and lullabies. Waldron tended to condense such influences under his weighty new harmonics. In solo performance, he often played fewer notes than when accompanied. The three chord pulse and bluesy responses of "Snake Out" are kept deliberately spare and unadorned here. Even the beautiful "Soul Eyes", probably his most covered composition, is allowed to wander down corridors of sound, and when he plays a standard, "You Don't Know What Love Is", he redacts much of the harmonisation, leaving it quite bare. Waldron's influence can be detected among contemporary players – Ethan Iverson most obviously – but there's still a gap between European and American perceptions, fans' devotion and proper critical regard. 45 years on, and 20 since Waldron's death, the Grenoble set surely addresses that.

Brian Morton

FREE
IMPROV
MUSIC

- Les Marquises -
Emilie Škrijelj
Tom Malmendier

- There or here and that -
Anil Eraslan
Fred Frith
Tom Malmendier
Clara Weil

- Latitudes -
Stéphane Clor
Armand Lesecq
Tom Malmendier
Emilie Škrijelj

- Distant Numbers -
Loris Binot
Lê Quan Ninh
Emilie Škrijelj

NEW RELEASE
- The Kort'dakian Crisis -
Mike Ladd
Tom Malmendier
Emilie Škrijelj

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The Inner Sleeve

This month's artwork selected by **Adrian Corker**

Luiz Eça/Bebeto/Helcio Milito
Tamba
RCA Victor 1974
Unknown cover designer

My first sense of the sleeves of records and the vinyl in them began in the late 1970s, with an uncle who owned a record stall in the now defunct Sheaf Market in Sheffield. Every birthday from about seven or eight years old, I received an album. Vinyl was ubiquitous and not hip like now, just a necessary medium for communicating various imaginary musical worlds.

Sheffield looked bleak in the late 1970s – economic hardship and the start of deindustrialisation were having its effect. Music felt like something essential, and a counterbalance to all of this. I remember being told how, in the past, the steel furnaces sometimes made the sky glow red. Electronic sound seemed to be parallel to this industrial decline, while also somehow emanating from it. With the advent of cheap monophonic synthesizers, it seemed to be in the air through all mediums, and a conduit out of it to future, possible worlds.

Fast forward to the late 90s and I am, with my then bandmate Paul Conboy, in Brazil recording an album with Celia Vaz, trying to merge the world of MPB with the incongruous tools of Akai samplers and Atari ST computers. We had recently recorded our first film score, for the British gangster film *Face* directed by Antonia Bird. Film music was an inextricable part of my musical lexicon, and the label, I think, hoped this would spill into our work with Celia Vaz.

Before recording we trawled around Rio looking for sounds to inspire us, and this album was one of the discoveries. Vinyl wasn't necessarily sold in specialist stores and could be found in the back of shops selling electrical household appliances or other random stuff.

Tamba is predominantly a bossa nova album but there is one killer track combining many unpredictable musical threads, "Reflexos", that always inspires me when I listen again. Flutes that could be from a Michael Small score combine with a Brazilian motorik beat, piano/tuned percussion reminiscent of a John Cage sonata, and a filtered snaky synth line to make it something more than the sum of its parts. The melody slides down and modulates all over the place, unpredictable and woozy, but somehow full of momentum.

The image on the cover echoes the music. It seems to convey something futuristic in a uniquely Brazilian way. This album was released the same year as Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* and some of its spirit seems to have spilled over. For me, the echoing, plasticine models of the band, combined with the Data 70 type used on dystopian science fiction films and Tangerine Dream albums, mark a meeting point between the analogue and digital worlds. It also seems to convey a humorous sense of possibilities. The track seems to merge sound from my past with that of a far away part of the world, creating new forms representing possible futures, and the way that the world for a while shrank, before the age we have now entered changed things back again. □ Adrian Corker's *Since It Turned Out Something Else* is released by SN Variations

Print Run

New music books

Unpicking Norwegian knitting patterns and setting them to music, **Cory Arcangel** and **Stine Janvin** investigate what makes a score. By **Louise Gray**

Identity Pitches
Stine Janvin & Cory Arcangel
Primary Information Pbk 72 pp

What is a score? Is it a set of musical notations on manuscript paper? Is it a picture? Is it a series of written instructions? As so many composers have shown – Cornelius Cardew, John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pauline Oliveros and the Fluxus artists (the list is far longer and stretches back to the 15th century at the very least) – a score is all of these things. And so it is with Stine Janvin and Cory Archangel's *Identity Pitches*, which use three traditional Norwegian knitting patterns for lusekofte (lice jacket) jumpers as their launch pad for creating conceptual scores, which are then to be performed by any number of players, equipped with whatever instruments they choose.

The transliteration of instructions from one medium or technology to another as a way of creating something new is a timeless strategy. It offers a continuing engagement with what has gone before to discuss something of the present in which we live. In recent years, many artists have used data sets of various types as a raw material for music making. In this respect, one of the most virtuosic artists working in this way is the composer Jennifer Walshe's seriously high jinx in AI, but, equally, one might look at Beryl Korot's translations of loom patterns into multimedia works or anyone sonifying data for use as a compositional source.

Janvin, a Norwegian vocalist and sound artist, and Archangel, a US conceptual artist well known for his data frying and now transplanted to Stavanger, are completely correct in reading their chosen patterns – the Setesdal, Fana and Selbu – as ripe for a new kind of performativity. Each pattern has certain rules – an x signifies a tone, a square a pause, for example – with vertical structures signifying simultaneous sounds across the parts, and the time of the performance reading from left to right. Numbers on the patterns – often rendered visually, as a grid – link to harmonic information, and the process is enriched further by the artists' clear curiosity about Norwegian knitting, instruments and tunings, and how they might be related.

This relational aspect is at the heart of *Identity Pitches*. Janvin and Arcangel might use traditional information, but they also reinvent it as a way of creating new meanings. The book is small – under 80 pages and printed in an edition of 2000 – but the scores themselves are arresting patterns, with the printed artists' dialogue offering the reader a deeper understanding of the process at work here. At the end of the book there are three vividly coloured *Deep-Tuned Patterns* that take the patterns a step further down the path of continuous translation. Deep is the word here, as it points towards the practice of Pauline Oliveros and her injunction to deep listen, that is, to listen at all times to all things. A former student of Oliveros, Arcangel had his personal eureka moment in her suggestion that artistic inspiration might come from multiple sources. Like Oliveros, Arcangel's work has often taken him inside systems – the logic of a Nintendo game, for example – as a way of understanding something about access, agency and representation.

In terms of score structure and organisation, there are echoes of Oliveros's *To Valerie Solanas And Marilyn Monroe In Recognition Of Their Desperation*, a work that strives to put equality at its centre. For Janvin and Arcangel, deep knitting offers much to think about. ☐

Desperado: An Autobiography
Tomasz Stańko with Rafał Księżyk
Equinox Publishing Hbk 358 pp

"I have a penchant for the unstable," avers Tomasz Stańko. "If I'd been born later, I'd have been a rock musician or a hiphop artist. This is all nonconformist music." The Polish trumpeter (1942–2018) was a restlessly creative player. As he comments here, "I'm an artist because I'm drawn to what doesn't exist. I find this world boring. There's always something missing."

Stańko was a vital figure in jazz and improvised music from the early 1960s onwards. His key early influence was pianist-composer Krzysztof Komeda, the tragic muse of Polish jazz, and he first became known as a member of Komeda's band (1963–67): "Word got out that I was a modern trumpeter who played mad music," he explains. He revered Komeda, and comments that "he was like a guru… One thing that Komeda was a genius at: control over form… I was entirely fulfilled working with [him], as if I was playing my own music…"

John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman were unavoidable influences, but an important mentor was Don Cherry. Discussing the latter's "dirty sound", Stańko comments that "He was fundamental to my avant garde education". Later associations with Cecil Taylor, Lee Konitz, Edward Vesala and Tony Oxley have reinforced Stańko's stature. He's an immediately recognisable stylist, whose rough, flared tone, with flurries shooting into the upper register, originates with Miles Davis, but became one of the most individual in modern jazz. He was also, crucially, a fine jazz composer.

Desperado is an extended set of interviews with journalist and broadcaster Rafał Księżyk, published in Polish in 2010 and now translated into English by Halina Maria Boniszewska. It's been rightly described as no holds barred. Księżyk is an equal partner for the discussions on music, and Stańko comes across as candid and insightful. The interviews took place during his late career eminence. The trumpeter's superb ECM album *Matka Joanna* appeared in 1994, and was followed three years later by the artistic triumph of his Komeda tribute *Litania*. He spent a decade leading a trio of young compatriots featuring brilliant pianist Marcin Wasilewski, and his final band was a New York quartet including David Virelles.

Księżyk clearly researched deeply and interrogates the trumpeter on bands, sessions and recordings. An editor could have taken out some of the resulting repetition. Drug use was involved in what Stańko called "living on the edge". However, it is over-discussed. Generally, the book has too much detail and long-windedness that could have been edited down – though this is a common problem.

But we do learn much of interest. Stańko says that he was always a rather isolated person: "I don't have that many friends. I have acquaintances." He quips that "what I've always liked about jazz is that you can have an accountant standing alongside a madman, and the two of them feel great together, because they've played well together."

The book is well-produced, with a chronology and discography as well as numerous photographs. It's an important account of the work of a major musician.
Andy Hamilton

The Guitar Circle
Robert Fripp
Panegyric Publishing Hbk 561 pp

Few if any had "Robert Fripp becomes an internet romantic icon" on their pandemic bingo card. And yet the guitarist – as much known for his work with David Bowie and Brian Eno as for his prog rock reign, since 1968, in King Crimson – spent much of the past two or more years with his wife Toyah Willcox, entertaining the locked down, the self-quarantined, and the remote-working. The frisky duo's popular YouTube videos feature humorous cover versions, barely covered nipples and enough costumes to fill a stately British home.

Fripp apparently also spent a chunk of the unexpected break from touring by collating his voluminous past writing on the topic of guitar instruction. A new tome, the 561 page *The Guitar Circle*, serves to balance his recently acquired goofy public persona with a heady dose of artistic philosophy. Out with the new, in with the old?

The book is neither tutorial nor autobiography. Don't pick it up if you're looking for sheet music or tour anecdotes. It is, instead, largely pre-existing material providing a mosaic account of Fripp's perspective on music instruction. There are speeches and entries from his ongoing dgmlive.com diary, and documents once created to orient attendees of the courses, originally named Guitar Craft, that he developed. (*Guitar Circle* was a subsequent rebranding. That the book doesn't take a moment, at the start, to spell out Fripp's decades of music instruction says something about its assumed audience.) Leavening patrician prickliness with whimsical self-effacement, he even includes a chapter of letters he wrote to disgruntled students, whom he charitably leaves anonymous.

And there are lists, of which Fripp seems quite fond. He delineates "Four Qualities Of Refusal", "Six Strategies Of Practising" and "Nine Stages Of Approaching Silence". The book's sole illustration is a list in visual form: a "Tetrad Of The Orchestra Of Crafty Guitarists". His favourite number appears to be seven. There are "Seven Assumptions For Work In The Circle", "Seven Lies Of The Devil", "Seven Views Of Charisma" and "Seven Affirmations".

The most cited list here is so natural to Fripp that he often leaves it nameless. He simply and repeatedly – a dozen or so times – refers to "head, hand and heart" as the three "instruments" of a musician. This is the book's crux: musicians – and by extension all practitioners of a craft – must attend to their intellect and emotions as much as to their skills. (We know Fripp's a romantic from his amorous videos with Willcox, but it's still notable how prominent a role love plays in *The Guitar Circle*. The word appears almost as often as discipline.) The innumerable entries can be summarised as follows: practise, and if you don't want to practise, sit with yourself for a while and then practise.

The book, a veritable mountain of aphorisms, evidences the discipline – that quintessential Fripp word – of someone who doesn't merely record his thoughts but who scrutinises and refines them. (Artists and bloggers alike should read him on the benefits of keeping a diary in public. "Maintaining a diary," he writes, "is itself a process, of engagement with oneself.") What it doesn't evidence is editorial discipline: as in music composition, context and economy would have given his theoretical riffs meaningful structure. *The Guitar Circle* is best read as it was written: over an extended period of time, a bit at a time.

Marc Weidenbaum

Bone Music
Stephen Coates
Strange Attractor Pbk 156 pp

From the late 1940s to the early 60s, processed X-ray film was the medium of choice for music bootleggers in the USSR. X-ray film was made from highly flammable silver nitrate, which meant that hospitals needed to offload it frequently. For a few roubles or a bottle of vodka, bootleggers could obtain a stack of images of skulls, ribs, hands and femurs on material soft enough to take a lathe-cut groove and hard enough to retain it.

Stephen Coates's *Bone Music*, a sequel to his 2015 *X-Ray Audio: The Strange Story Of Soviet Music On The Bone*, traces the history of X-ray recordings from their beginnings in Hungary to their cultural and political role in Stalin and Krushchev's Russia. It begins with Stanislaw Philo, owner of a Leningrad talking letter studio, which allowed customers to create souvenir recordings. Though the business was officially sanctioned, his use of its German Telefunken lathe was not: at night, Philo transformed the studio into a record store selling tangos and other banned music that he had illegally reproduced.

A group of teenagers, Boris Taigin, Ruslan Bogoslovsky and Eugene Sankova, copied his business model by literally copying his Telefunken. Bogoslovsky surreptitiously created blueprints of the machine to recreate it in his father's workshop. The three became known as the Golden Dog Gang, competing with Philo and building lathes for other incipient bootleggers. Soon, a movement spread from Leningrad to Moscow and across Russia as a whole, with ambitious music fans cutting albums onto X-ray with homemade lathes to sell all genres of censored music, including Western jazz and rock 'n' roll but also Soviet émigré music and Russian blatnaya pesnya, or "criminal songs".

The highlight of the book is Coates's interviews with people involved in the manufacture and distribution of X-ray audio. Though Philo and the Golden Dog Gang had died, Coates was able to locate a wide variety of characters willing to reminisce about their illegal activities. Independent bootlegger Mikhail Farafanov convinced his clientele to try jazz, making him entrepreneur, music critic and cultural vanguard all at once. Rudy Fuchs was derided in the press for selling rock 'n' roll "on the bone", called a "breaker of souls" who "delighted" in the violence allegedly caused "to the rhythms of rock 'n' roll". Alexey Kozlov, a stilyaga – a member of the Western influenced counterculture – went from music fan to musician after being inspired by Gerry Mulligan to learn the saxophone, which was banned as a symbol of US cultural decadence.

The most affecting encounter is with Kolya Vasin, known in Russia as the "Beatles guy", who wanted to create an official temple to the band in St Petersburg. He killed himself in 2019 without realising this dream. Quotes from each interview subject are peppered throughout the text, along with fantastic photographic portraits by Paul Heartfield. Ultimately, *Bone Music*'s greatest asset is also its largest flaw, as the reader is left wanting longer excerpts of these interviews to get a better sense of these remarkable figures.

X-ray records are a visual medium as much as an aural one, and *Bone Music* is richly illustrated with dozens of images of X-rays and other flexi-discs from the era. Distributing banned music was a dangerous job because of official Soviet crackdowns as well as black market banditry. Bogoslovsky did three stints in prison, while Farafanov had to wrestle away knives from would-be thieves. It's difficult not to see these objects as fitting symbols of the people profiled in the book, with their depictions of physical injury overlaid with the music that made them risk so much.

Matthew Blackwell

A selection of X-ray recordings from *Bone Music*

Stephen Coates/Strange Attractor

69 Exhibition Road: Twelve True-Life Tales From The Fag-End Of Punk, Porn And Performance
Dorothy Max Prior
Strange Attractor Pbk 328 pp

Early on in her lively, chatty memoir, Dorothy Max Prior remarks that she likes drummers who "don't pretend to be anything other than somebody who sits in the back and hits things". It's an incongruous statement in the context of the 12 tales inside *69 Exhibition Road*, illuminating her life as drummer with post-punks Rema-Rema, but mainly as an artist, dancer, muse and bisexual girl about town.

Born in London, Prior was in her early twenties at the dawn of punk, and seemingly present at every important event during the scene's rise and fall – from Throbbing Gristle's infamous Prostitution exhibition to early Sex Pistols shows. Among her friends and lovers were members of Adam And The Ants, Siouxsie And The Banshees and The Clash. She worked as a go-go dancer to pay the rent, sharing an agent with Cosey Fanni Tutti.

69 Exhibition Road is titled after the address she lived at with her 'wife', Andy Warren of The Ants and The Monochrome Set ("I like to think that ours is the house where Roman Polanski filmed *Repulsion*"). The book could be read as a series of places that Prior has occupied, from the faded grandeur of rented rooms in Kensington and Belgravia, to the Hackney HQ of Throbbing Gristle and Industrial Records, who released her only 7" single "I Confess" – a sweetly incongruous ditty dreamt up as a Eurovision entry. The song is a list of her pop cultural favourites (*"Sinatra's Songs For Swinging Lovers/ magazines in shrink-wrapped covers"*) and the book functions similarly, as a collection of encounters, people and interests – ephemeral, gossipy and aesthetically descriptive.

The era is memoired to death, so it's no surprise that the book is most interesting when unusual characters or stories pop up. Prior was a lover of both the cultural anthropologist Ted Polhemus and his curator wife Lynn Procter, who act as early soundboards for both queer and pop cultural discovery. Through Procter, Prior gets a job at London's ICA, putting on Adam & The Ants' first gig in the gallery cafe, to the horror of its middle class patrons. She's around for the chaotic filming of Derek Jarman's *Jubilee*, where she meets both Brian Eno and a young Arnold Schwarzenegger in the producers' kitchen in Notting Hill. She cites Patti Smith's 1976 show at The Roundhouse as a catalyst for female punks in same way the early Sex Pistols shows were for boys.

Also interesting is Prior's love for music far outside the realms of punk – and her insistence that this was the norm for those in the scene, including Jordan, whose favourite song was Glen Campbell's "Wichita Lineman". It feels radical and exciting to read about Prior's cultivation of a queer femme aesthetic against the grain of the era, as well as her tales of lesbian supper clubs, disco nights and the lesser reported queer crossover with the punk scene. Another highlight is a chapter on her life as a stripper, a somewhat wholesome account that also details the music she and her colleagues chose to dance to (Lou Reed, Jane Birkin, The Velvet Underground's "Venus In Furs").

Dorothy Max Prior

A lot of the book's downsides could have been eradicated in the edit: some statements about gender/sexual liberation are made like they have never been heard before, and the narrative is disrupted with repeated stories and jumps in time. But Prior is well-placed to tell the story, and a freewheeling, natural raconteur – another identity to add to the long list.
Claire Biddles

Listening After Nature
Mark Peter Wright
Bloomsbury Academic Hbk 224 pp

Publications in acoustic ecology and soundscape studies often investigate sound and the environment in relation to human impact, framed through silence and absence, such as that left by an extinct species, or as polemic, like Steve Goodman's critique of industrial noise in *Sonic Warfare*. *Listening After Nature* is not a technical guide to field recording and it doesn't examine sound through thematic tropes such as a sense of place or memory. Instead, the reader learns that the recordist cannot, and never could be, considered neutral.

Wright asserts that cultural contexts and practice are bound to our understanding of ecology, and so artistic methods, perspective and tools are critical lenses for us to use when approaching field recordings. Once we include these, the "tremors of the Anthropocene" and their effects inscribe every inch of the planet. Wright explains, "Field recordists are embroiled in its epochal footprint and are analysed as an integral part of a post-natural setting."

Wright situates himself – not by standing on the sidelines or by listening at a distance – but by looking at the intersections of recording practice and research. Archival documents and contemporary works are considered equally, as both present and past experiences and practice are necessary to inform a fuller overview. The first chapter focuses on upturning the historical roots of field recording. It traces connections between ethnomusicology and nonhuman field recording, from colonial and technological vantage points. Wright asks questions about authorship, self-silence and noise when looking at contemporary works by David Michael, Antye Greie (AGF) and Christopher DeLaurenti. When discussing "They Want To Be Eaten" by Michael, Wright outlines the significance of amplifying sounds that would normally be edited out. The artistic reclaiming of sounds that are often deemed as noise or a nuisance can provide a para-commentary on fieldcraft. We begin to listen to the low frequencies of practice; we learn of the multifarious nature of listening, sounding and learning, and the abundant power of silent witnessing.

The second chapter investigates the use of recordings from nature: how they are used and why. Introducing his idea of "the conservation-composition complex", Wright discusses the paradoxical bind in which recordists negotiate appropriation, preservation and rights. A discussion of Sir David Attenborough's sound archive project "My Field Recordings From Across the Planet" demonstrates how field recordings reach audiences through the context of music, and the ambiguous bind the recordist enters, asking, "Who is the music creator?"

When discussing legal precedents for the sonic rights of nature, he uses the famous example of the MGM studio lion roar. When granted legal status and a trademark number in 2008, the legal subject in the copyright contract was named Nature, and not specifically Leo, the seventh lion used in this role. While demanding we consider the individual lion as subject here, instead of Nature, ironically reinforces an anthropocentric monetisation of nonhumans, it also demonstrates the need for humans to look further into the power relationships of human – animal – land encounters. If all musicians were pooled together under a collective title, there'd be hell in a copyright lawsuit. By situating thoughts like these with the reader, Wright makes an eloquent point about the field as a site of multiple perspectives. The issue here isn't that Leo the lion wasn't paid royalties for his roar, or even about moral codes, but about the need for humans to consider these perspectives.

The third chapter asks how we can document and communicate sensitive sites with field recordings. It uses three distinct topics as focal points: oil as a material actor in relation to recording, infra- and ultrasonic worlds accessed by hydrophones and contact microphones, and a new conceptual model of "contact zones and elsewhere fields", which disrupts ideas of friction-free field recording and considers its subjects as agential forces rather than compositional elements. Exploring how field recording can participate, document and communicate with sites, Wright considers different methods for observation.

At first, the scholarly language takes a little time to decipher, but once invested, *Listening After Nature* is a very interesting read. A comprehensive and thought-provoking book, it brings together popular, new and possibly radical ideas for readers to consider. Wright is another brilliant example of a practising artist whose passionate interest and work thoroughly informs a clever, heartfelt book.
Mariam Rezaei

Strange Attractor

Rap Capital: An Atlanta Story
Joe Coscarelli
Simon & Schuster Hbk 448 pp

Almost a natural resource now – sync to wifi and the tap is primed to start flowing – it's far too easy to take music for granted. That goes double for rap, which stylistically and otherwise has dominated the pop marketplace since most teenagers have been alive. Sanctioned, illicit, overpromoted, or defiantly underground, so much hiphop exists (while the monocultural outlets that chronicle the genre wink out of existence like dying stars) that it can be conceived not as the product of labour and experience but as an ever-replenishing current of interchangeable ad-libs, adjectives, boasts and beats burbling up from an ever expanding pool of playlists.

A data-rich cousin once removed from Roni Sarig's *Third Coast: OutKast, Timbaland, And How Hip-Hop Became A Southern Thing* from 2007, the remarkable *Rap Capital: An Atlanta Story* takes pains to remind us that hiphop is gestated, funded, nurtured, promoted and made not by algorithms but by actual people with thoughts, dreams and fears. Joe Coscarelli, a *New York Times* culture journalist, paints stark portraits of Atlanta, Georgia and the modern rap ecosystem. As he relates the city's brutal history, demographic cruelty, hard-won status as America's "Black Mecca", cultural royalty and mainstream pop progenitors, and uniquely sprawling geography, the author slowly but surely threads in the origin stories of protagonists whose fates will (mostly) intersect.

We meet diminutive striver Lil Reek, doomed to a career that crashes before it can get off the ground; workmanlike MC Marlo, perpetually on the come-up cusp; yin and yang Quality Control Music founders Kevin 'Coach K' Lee and Pierre 'P' Thomas; absurdist onomatopoeic trio Migos and crossover weirdo Lil Yachty; and Lil Baby, a convict and hustler who didn't leave the streets behind until he was nearing the top of the rap game.

Rap Capital is at its best as the middle approaches, as Coscarelli's intensive reporting coalesces into isolated moments, scenes so vivid that the writer becomes a videographer. Marlo FaceTimes with his girlfriend and son for hours while struggling, futilely, to mint a new song for a Starz network show. Migos blow off their handlers and a *Culture* listening party, insolently commandeer a studio and, in painstakingly piecemeal fashion, craft a Zaytoven-produced banger they never bother to release: "It was just a moment in time, and there would be plenty more."

A triumphant Lil Baby finally finds his live footing in New York after the release of *Harder Than Ever*. A post-label contract Lil Reek praises and cares for the grandmother who helped raise him, while serving as a carpool driver for his younger siblings.

Other scenes underscore the performative banality of Instagram-era celebrity: "Every half hour or so, the club's staff dropped off more banded stacks of dollar bills, which then sat somewhat pathetically at everyone's feet until someone with authority decided to let them flutter atop the heads of the bottle-service squad in an approximation of a strip club celebration."

The scourges of death, crushing poverty, misogyny, drug trafficking and narcotic overindulgence hover over *Rap Capital* like dark storm clouds – the bleak realities that midwife so much mainstream modern hiphop. That the genre is in large part a reaction to and result of persisting American slavery and Jim Crow policies, and that a feedback loop remains in play – the initial exploitation and then demonising of black bodies begat a culture today strip-mined for profit, vampirised by mass culture and used as a political scapegoat – infuriates anew, even as a fortunate few ascend to wealth and wide influence.
Raymond Cummings

A selection of album covers from *Sun Ra: Art On Saturn: The Album Cover Art of Sun Ra's Saturn Label*

Sun Ra: Art On Saturn: The Album Cover Art Of Sun Ra's Saturn Label
Sun Ra with Irwin Chusid & Chris Reisman (Editors)
Fantagraphics Hbk 240 pp

Sun Ra: Art On Saturn is a pleasure to behold. On big 12" album-size pages, the book offers a sumptuous tribute to the record cover art on Sun Ra's label Saturn. As if one might know the band by eyes alone: the iconography and design, the imagination and resourcefulness found in the covers suggest transports not unlike those experienced by listening.

Through some 70 LPs, from the 1950s to the 80s, Ra and his Arkestra presented their music in editions to be sold mostly at concerts. For a long while, the covers were preprinted, but in the 70s album design turned into a more homemade affair, assembled as needed, in which everyone in the Arkestra participated. The technology of the mass-produced multiple was thus subverted, where every item became unique, including the labels affixed to the vinyl. Given the well-defined scope of the materials, this book would seem preordained: as documentation of a particular creative activity, celebrating its collective spirit.

But if this volume is really about packaging, "how Sun Ra packaged his own music", as archival wizard Irwin Chusid notes in his introduction, the challenge for the editors was to determine the nature of the book itself. The preprinted covers included some measure of variations, but the handmade covers showed a limitless reach of possibilities. What's more, those covers often bore no title – a cataloguer's nightmare, which musician Glenn Jones recounts from the years in the late 70s, when he worked for Rounder Records distribution. He discusses the efforts it took him to bring the Saturn catalogue into the fold, and procure copies of each new release and get on the phone with the Arkestra house in Philadelphia to figure out the title. For a book to contain the range of that artwork, representing the best of what's known to exist, is no small task. Fortunately, there are many devoted collectors of Saturn records – chief among them Chris Reisman, who provides a discography of the label – which meant a surfeit of examples to choose from and organise.

Rhythmically, the book is smartly laid out. Amid unused covers and rough drafts for illustrations, the few brief texts guide us ever further into the world of these records, culminating in John Corbett's insightful history of Sun Ra and the label, with a detailed assessment of the cover art, its styles and methods and experiments. The ample section displaying the printed covers and labels achieves an easy balance alternating among full and quarter-size reproductions, granting a substantial sense of the Ra visual universe.

But enticing as these images are, the unbridled florescence of the whole enterprise resides in the handmade covers (for all their less-polished appearance and lack of written information), seen in full-page panels that take up the bulk of the book: collage, handpainted photos and abstract patterns, repurposed old printed covers, different colour motifs for the same strange drawing, many trimmed or laminated with a patch of transparent shower curtain. Poring over them, you can lose track of where you are, swept up in a realm of mystery and other spaces. And we haven't even gotten to the music yet.
Jason Weiss

Courtesy Fantagraphics

Little Annie in Beth B's *Glowing Woman* (2022)

Glowing Woman
Beth B (Director)
Beth B 2022, 13 mins

Who gets to glow? When a woman is told she glows, it tends to mean she looks young, healthy, fecund – doing things right, looking after herself. In Beth B's short film, the singer and artist Little Annie glows differently and defiantly, twirling under a mirror ball, walking on a sunlit beach and wading serenely through a Hockney-blue swimming pool, a black negligee streaming out behind her.

Annie's relationship with light is complicated, if the lyrics of the songs on the soundtrack are anything to go by. Sunlight is beautiful but overwhelming (in a cover of Patrick Duff's "Dead Man Singing"), and the spotlight's beam illuminates regret and loss. Anecdotes, told in voiceover, concern shadowy places and situations: drinking in a bar on a "grey-skied Sunday" and a "dark night of the soul" that maroons her indoors, "skin crawling, 24-hour TV watching".

Annie – aka Annie Anxiety, real name Annie Bandez – is often described as a survivor, a term with many connotations. I think what people tend to mean is that she looks and sounds as if she has lived many lives, none of them easy. It's also a way of referencing the New York art and music underground in which Annie immersed herself as a teenager in the late 1970s, and which often aestheticised trauma and endurance, visually and aurally.

The implication, too, is that many did not survive this era. Those who did, like Annie and her contemporary Lydia Lunch, address their pasts in various ways. Lunch, whom Beth B profiled in *The War Is Never Over* (2019), is still spoiling for a fight. Annie's approach is elegiac and romantic, embodying the most melancholy of torch singers on albums with Paul Wallfisch and Baby Dee.

As a writer and storyteller, her tales are lightened, or at least scuffed up, by street-level humour and an eye for detail. In *Glowing Woman*, over a solarised sequence of her dancing with a woman in a trouser suit (performance artist Evilyn Frantic), Annie remembers how a man once wooed her by buying her silver and perspex high-heeled slingbacks off the local crack dealer. She fondly describes the shoes as "cunty": "I know that's not a very ladylike description, but honestly it's the only one that applies," she shrugs.

Meanwhile Beth B was a participant in, not merely an observer of no wave: her early 8mm films, made with Scott B, visualised the extremes that musicians such as Lunch (who often appeared in those films) were exploring in sound. In both her experimental work and in more conventional documentary, such as 2013's *Exposed*, about underground burlesque performers, B often pays close attention to bodies and physicality; in *Glowing Woman* her camera lingers on Annie's face, arms and hands, capturing her gestures and movements with empathy.

The film's drifting, daydream-like quality also reminds you that Annie was not always anchored to New York: she left the city in the early 80s, living for many years in the UK where she collaborated with Adrian Sherwood, among others, before spending some years in Mexico. *Glowing Woman*'s beaches, pools, stages and anonymous tiled interiors add up to a sense of placelessness that suits its wandering subject.

Glowing Woman is currently screening at a retrospective of B's films at MoMa, New York, but was originally devised for *52 Jokers*, a theatre production created by Annie with Beth B, Paul Wallfisch, Evilyn Frantic and composer Jim Coleman (of Cop Shoot Cop), which recently premiered in Germany. B created short films to project during the performance, but she says that the project "took on a life of its own", and became a discrete work – and that more *Glowing Woman* films are to come, about other subjects.

B's vision of what it means to glow, which may be another way of saying what it means to be alive despite everything, is expansive and curious; it will be interesting to see who she chooses to shine a light on in subsequent chapters.

Frances Morgan

Lola Coleman

Jayne County in *Nightclubbing: The Birth Of Punk Rock In NYC* (2022)

Nightclubbing: The Birth Of Punk Rock In NYC

Danny Garcia (Director)

Chip Baker Films 2022, 80 mins

Hearing how New York of the 1960s and 70s was dangerous and lawless feels as overfamiliar as yellow cabs and "I heart NY" signs, so it's refreshing that Danny Garcia's documentary *Nightclubbing: The Birth Of Punk Rock In NYC* is rich with some of the grottier details, bad smells, vomit, terrible toilets.

It tells the story of Max's Kansas City, a steak house with a back room that was popular first with artists of the New York School, then Warhol, the Factory Superstars and The Velvet Underground. It was reborn in the wake of glam rock as the epicentre of the New York punk scene, before finally burning out at the turn of the 80s as punk was morphing into something else. Bad Brains were the last headliners, supported by Beastie Boys.

There are some thrilling bits of footage and unseen photographs here, which go some way to demonstrate both the unmistakeable charisma of many of the performers but also the deep throngs of awful hangers-on and gatekeepers who surrounded them. If you ever got a trip in a time machine and visited Max's yourself, there's a real chance that you'd get to see a tepid set from Ruby & The Rednecks while someone lobbed dried chickpeas at your head.

Garcia's film is a valuable if somewhat uneven documentary. Not everyone from the scene survived, of course, and of those who did survive, there are some notable omissions. Some of the best contributions come from either those with no cool image to maintain – either because they're so secure in their position that they don't need to be try-hard, like Lenny Kaye who is always clear-sighted and generally the smartest person in the room, or because they have maintained some degree of perspective about just an amusing episode of their youth, like former waitress Donna Destri. Jayne County is on fine sardonic form, and gets most of the best lines.

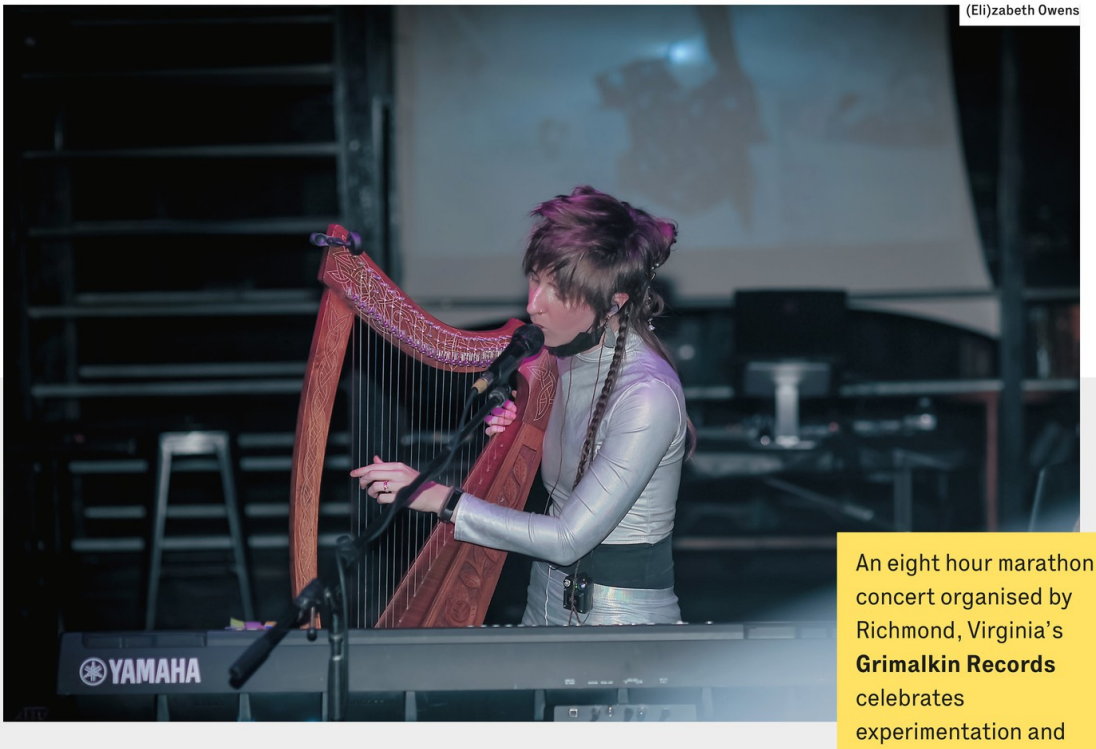
For the most part, memories are somewhat addled and not everyone interviewed here can reliably discern the difference between an anecdote and just something that happened. The stories might well have been better if the film was made 20 years ago. Still, as the old proverb goes, the best time to plant a tree was a hundred years ago, but the second best time is now. Getting at least some of this motley gang together one last time is still a worthwhile enterprise. Less worthwhile are the sporadic animated reconstructions which are inconsistently used and don't add a great deal to the atmosphere.

It was legendary, everyone says, and that appears to be literally true because the Max's they describe is mutable and shape-shifting, like the site of an ancient myth. For some, the scuzziness of the toilets is what they remember, but to others they were positively luxurious compared to CBGBs down the road. Max's got an appropriate ending, all things considered. It could have been edged out by property developers, or – even worse – it could still exist as a logo slapped on to novelty logo underwear and baby bibs, like CBGBs.

It transpires that Max's heyday had incorporated an amateurish side gig making counterfeit money in the basement. And so, its story ends with its proprietor Tommy Dean Mills owing "one million dollars" to "the mob". The building was coincidentally valued at the exact same sum, so Tommy sold up, squared up, cashed out. I hope he checked his change.

Tessa Norton

Courtesy Chip Baker Films



(Eli)zabeth Owens

Randy Byrd

An eight hour marathon concert organised by Richmond, Virginia's **Grimalkin Records** celebrates experimentation and community. By **Emily Pothast**

Grimalkin Music Fest 2022

Fallout, Richmond, US/Bandcamp

"This next song is called "Hospitality" and it's about being nice to yourself," says (Eli)zabeth Owens into a spacy delay. Although many of the songs in Owens's set incorporate harp, this one relies on digital keyboard and soft beats, with soaring vocals that reveal the influence of Björk and Kate Bush: *"When hurt finds its way to you, open the door, pour the tea and let it be"*. Owens is the opening act for the first Grimalkin Music Festival, and in many ways, this song could function as the event's mission statement.

In an industry that seems to grow ever more cutthroat as artists compete for increasingly limited opportunities, Richmond, Virginia based Grimalkin Records feels like an oasis of care. A nonprofit label and collective with a mission to support queer, transgender, BIPOC and disabled artists, Grimalkin demonstrates the essential role that music can play in creating a sense of community, both in person and via the internet (through which I am streaming this marathon eight hour event).

Some of the featured artists seem relatively inexperienced at playing live shows, which translates into a few false starts and other vulnerable moments, made more visible by the fact that their set-up and line check is part of the live stream. But thinking about this festival through a lens of mentorship and mutual aid helps frame such glitches not as failures but evidence of artists pushing themselves out of their comfort zones, trying new things for an audience of friends. One of the most truly enchanting performances comes from Tiara & Andrew, a folksy electronic pop duo hailing from rural Brunswick County. Their music is centred on Tiara Mustafa's soothing melodies and stellar vocals, set adrift by the liquid strumming of Andrew Blackwell's honeyed guitar. Between songs, Mustafa tells the audience that they recently completed their first tour, which was also their first time travelling out of state. "We're country worms," she laughs. "Our neighbours are cows." Days later, I find myself humming their song "Lie Next To Me", an inviting ode to cocooning that almost makes me nostalgic for pandemic lockdowns: *"We don't need to go outside/Everything we need is right here"*.

The festival owes much of its overall vibe to Baltimega, the DJ who brings the party between sets for the entire duration. Also memorable are performances from some of Grimalkin's board members, like the voice-transformed cosmic rap of Ishtar Sr (aka Savan DePaul) and the sludgy guitar worship of Infinite Bliss (aka Eric Kemp), made even heavier by the inclusion of a recording of Martin Luther King Jr's "I've Been To The Mountaintop" speech. Grimalkin founder and executive director Nancy Grim Kells plays a set of thoughtful guitar folk as Spartan Jet-Plex, helping to contextualise the moments of heaviness with lines like *"There's dark and light/sometimes the darkness wins the fight"*.

Later, after performing a set that weaves a robot voice reading the manifesto "100 anti-theses on cyberfeminism" through a matrix of whirring noise and crunchy beats, Grimalkin artist Hunting Dog makes a statement that beautifully summarises the Grimalkin ethos: "If any of you have a hobby or something that you love that you think isn't important, do it anyway. You have this one life, and it's amazing if you make it that way." □

Adam Rudolph's Go: Organic Orchestra + Brooklyn Raga Massive + Gift Of Gnawa Honouring Don Cherry + Brandee Younger & Joel Ross + Angel Bat Dawid

Central Park, New York, US

This concert, on a lovely late summer's evening, is the season opener for the World Music Institute. It's free to all, and that public aspect is part of the feeling: abstract music in the sense that a lot of it is about the playing, and social in that the roots are in gathering people together.

So, a culmination of many things, including past and present. Appropriately, the pivot point on this triple bill is in the middle. The short opening set comes from harpist Brandee Younger and vibraphonist Joel Ross. The two play original material, but open with "Lift Ev'ry Voice" and close with Stevie Wonder's "If It's Magic". They are rhythmically sharp, Younger's articulation carrying drive in each note, and Ross is lightly swinging. Front and centre of their playing is the simple and substantial beauty of the sound of the two instruments together. It's shining and pellucid, with the delicacy of wind chimes along with a tensile strength, like stainless steel glistening after rain.

The feeling is mellow energy, relaxed and open to each moment, and primes the senses for what comes next. Adam Rudolph and Hassan Hakmoun revisit *The Gift Of The Gnawa*, a classic world music album from 1991, with trumpeter Graham Haynes and percussionist Abderahim Hakmoun replacing the departed Don Cherry and ney player Richard Horowitz. This is pocket playing, deeper than any pocket imagined, Rudolph and Hassan and Abderahim free but consistent in their own rhythms shaping an unerring pulse that comes up from the ground and fills the body's open space. It's a joy to hear, and feel, this mastery. In these players' hands, the music reaches suave, timeless heights. Haynes plays bright, succinct Cherry-like phases on top, then downward scales, and Abderahim delights the crowd by spinning the tassel on top of his skull in time with the music.

Set change-overs are quick and entertaining in themselves, featuring Angel Bat Dawid, not playing but DJing. Dawid spins funk, soul and spiritual jazz, including Parliament and early Andy Bey. A Dorothy Ashby track follows Younger and Ross, and Cherry's "Brown Rice" makes a perfect transition between the *Gnawa* set and the main attraction.

The latter features the monster amalgamation of The Go: Organic Orchestra and Brooklyn Raga Massive, two hybrid groups that make a fusion powerhouse of percussion, sitar, electric guitar and bass, electric piano, strings, a bassoon, and more, and that's even before Younger, Ross and the two Hakmouns join in for the final few numbers.

The only flaw in this performance is technical: the soloist is another old friend of Rudolph, Dave Liebman. But his soprano saxophone is mixed so poorly that his playing drops out, like he's on a cell phone in a car. The rest is gorgeous, emotionally and physically stirring. Rudolph conducts, cueing groups and formal sections, and there's some kind of conduction going on as he builds and shapes organic, intuitive form. The ramping up to climaxes is like world music power balladry, but there's nothing in the world like Carnatic flute, vocals and rock guitar, or funky trombone, and layering a tala and samba on top of each other is naturally hip and brilliant. This is global music as wonderful synthesis of human cultures.

George Grella

Ceol Nua: Blarvuster & Malin Makes Music

Blue Arrow Jazz Club, Glasgow, UK

From Yoshi Wada to Lise Barkas, Paul Dunmall to Katariin Raska, the experimental music world is very much at home with the primal drones and scratchy tunings of the bagpipes. But what does the traditional music world make of these deviant tendencies? Now in its 19th year, Piping Live! is the world's biggest piping festival. It's always been open to different traditions, but Ceol Nua, featuring Matthew Welch's Blarvuster and Malin Lewis, is its first avant garde concert.

California based Welch coined the term Ceol Nua – new music – to describe compositions that combine Highland traditions with elements of classical and experimental music. A virtuoso piper in his youth, Welch has kept one foot in the Highland tradition while working with the likes of Anthony Braxton, Alvin Lucier and Julia Wolfe. His music has become a touchstone for adventurous pipers, not least Lewis, who grew up in Skye and studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Music in Glasgow and the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki.

Performing under their stage name Malin Makes Music, Lewis is joined by soprano saxophonist Matthew Herd and electric bassist Alan Keary. Playing the Highland pipes, Lewis bends traditional idioms into new shapes, deftly using an octave pedal to bring a doom metal lurch to the melody and drones. With their jazz chops, Herd and Keary open things up further. There's a tendency in Scottish jazz-folk fusions for the saxophone to take on a smooth post-Garbarek waftiness – a sound I call Celtic mist – but Herd pitches it just right, complementing Lewis's vivid lines with spiralling modal runs. Keary is equally resourceful, moving from supple grooves to electronic smears.

There's a striking take on "What A Voice, What A Voice" from the singing of the great Lizzie Higgins, as sampled by Martyn Bennett on his Celtic fusion classic *Grit*. Its plaintive melody translates beautifully to the Highland pipes, underlining how lyrical and expressive the instrument can be. Lewis's boldest experiment is "Reeds", where they play two detached reeds simultaneously to explore the beating effects as they go in and out of tune with each other. The piece seems largely improvised, with Lewis alternating between long intersecting arcs, puckering squawks and breath sounds. Herd and Keary go free, working through stained tones, squeaks and percussive scuttles. The future of Scottish folk is here.

From Downtown Manhattan to California, Blarvuster have gone through several iterations in their 20 year history (past members include Mary Halvorson, Brian Chase and Ches Smith). Now a power trio with Aaron Germain on bass and Jordan Glenn on drums, the group bring rock muscle and jazz fluidity to Welch's compositions. Holst's *Jupiter Hymn* might seem an oddly populist choice of opener, but it's undeniably stirring on the pipes.

But the set really gets going with Welch's own tunes, which fold Afropop references into jigs, and weave together Balinese gamelan and minimalism. The epic "Blind Piper's Obstinacy" has Welch alternating between bagpipes, voice and alto saxophone. Germain and Glenn drive hard, making each pass more outrageous than the last. After 18 minutes of relentless bagpipe shredding, raw Gaelic song and John Zorn-like skronk, the piece explodes in a final free jazz burst. Traditionalists might flinch, but with young composers like Lewis on board, Ceol Nua has the makings of a wildly exciting movement.

Stewart Smith

Malin Makes Music

John Slavin

Laraaji

Deep In The Valley

From The Ground Brewery, Red Hook, US

When Andy French takes the stage to announce the day's official start, there are still only a handful of onlookers in the sundrenched meadow to greet him. The rest of the early arrivals are in a tented picnic area in front of From The Ground Brewery, a roughhewn roadside establishment three hours from New York City in a place the map calls Red Hook, but which I prefer to think of as Woodstock country. French's words have hardly faded and openers Dominic & The Family Band tuned up, however, when this detachment of enthusiasts scurries to the front of the stage to position their festival-sanctioned recording gear.

Enthusiasm in its many forms has brought us this far. Since 2006, French has been the major force behind Raven Sings The Blues, an online outlet devoted to covering folk, psychedelia and avant rock. Deep In The Valley is his first official event, and while other festivals have dotted this region in recent years, perhaps no other has planted its freak flag – be it Family Band's countrified spirals or Joseph Allred's elfin seesaw from harmonium to guitar– with such emphasis.

From my blanket in the smouldering crabgrass, the sun is getting hot and the energy creeping towards the surreal. Jesse Sheppard and Drew Gardner's guitar duo Elkhorn take the stage, joined impromptu by Ryan Jewell on tabla. Jewell is a major node in new music, and his deft accompaniment helps to weave duelling guitar melody and drone into a single, hypnotic braid.

The meadow is now filling up, while a set from experimental saxophone auguress Ashley Paul gets underway. Hers is a mournful mix of reed, poetry, sampling and object-percussion, a dark turn into free jazz that Jeffrey Alexander & The Heavy Lidders pick up on when Paul joins them for a group improvisation. Later, the Lidders quartet – who include Sheppard and Gardner – crash-lands with a smeary, hypertense rendition of Willie Dixon's immortal "Spoonful."

Meltdown conditions are approaching as Wet Tuna slouch through other space. Fleshed out with Erika Elder on effects and Matthew 'Doc' Dunn on bass, Matt Valentine's kandy-kolored cornball funk has never sounded like a more profound put-on. Phase-shifting through Peter Laughner's "Baudelaire" over an arid drum file, Valentine underscores the lurching left end of the metabolic spectrum.

Jewell reappears next, as advertised, in a trio with guitarist Chris Forsyth and Bill Nace on taishogoto, for a harsh, high frequency improvisation that verges on noise terror. Among enthusiasts of this type, there will always be some appetite for pain – call it the catabolic tendency – but to my ears, Nace's assault leaves precious little space for the others to manoeuvre.

By the time headliner Laraaji has draped his console table with an iris-emblazoned saffron scarf, dusk is in full effect. Over cascading melodies, snatches of gamelan, crickets, birdsong and dubby resounding tones, the new age master offers koan-like invitations: to point to the nearest heavenly body, to open your heart.

The sky is filling with nocturnal cool; at its rim, stars are appearing. Laraaji is laughing, now, into his own variation on "This Little Light Of Mine". What began as an unassuming meditation has itself taken on a volume reaching for crescendo. "Everywhere I go," he says, "I'm gonna pass on that reverb."

Ryan Meehan

Dip In The Pool

WWW, Tokyo, Japan

Just shy of an hour before the concert is set to start, most of the audience have taken their seats in the cavernous WWW – they've probably arrived early to hear a set from Chee Shimizu, a crate digger whose choice tastes match the rare flavour of Dip In The Pool which many experienced for the first time in the 2010s by way of reissue labels like Music From Memory. More English is spoken than usual in the club at a time when tourists are still forbidden entry to Japan.

Before Miyako Koda graces the mic, her voice, with its sublime cool, spreads through the air. Tatsuji Kimura and a band of cheery ringers follow the music to their instruments as if pulled by gentle magnets. The drums are real, but the guitar is fake; above a small keyboard Kimura summons up a variety of instruments and prerecorded chunks of songs. The distinct ratio of synthetic to organic that typifies Dip In The Pool's sound necessitates this.

Koda, who is still recognised first as a model in Japan, glows in an perfectly odd all white bondage strapped ensemble. She sings in English, and at times in Japanese, with the lush glamour of an old world cabaret star. While it may be vain to suggest that there's any one way to read the emotion of a song, Dip In The Pool presents a particular challenge to the listener who would try – delicate murmurs are carried by oblique beats, sighs interrupted by the excited strum of a guitar. This confusion can be wonderful – in "On Retinae", Koda pleads *"Shake me soft"*, to strings plucked with an uncaring robotic thump. The addition of a live band fortunately buffs the unit's sound rather than disrupting it: Daniel Baeder's relaxed drumming opens a less concrete road for Koda's voice, while a vibraphone played by Amada Yazusa offers resonance to synthy arrangements.

But the balance seems a little off. The prerecorded components give little room for the vibraphone to breathe and nearly consume the upright bass. The concert is run as a hybrid event, with a larger audience tuning in from around the world via live stream – between songs Kimura explains how the technology works, and suggests that audience members more interested in the sound of the performance should check the recording later (I did, and found the balance somewhat improved).

Played as an encore, last year's single "What About This Love" celebrates the band's vitality with a danceable pulse. Kimura seems to hold fundamentally rare sensibilities toward the role of technology in music, perhaps attributable to Deep In The Pool's mid-80s origin. Those sensibilities, appealingly dated, feel more carefree than curious. While that attitude might ensure some of their charm, I wonder if more exercises in live instrumentation would present a greater picture. And – less critically – I am left wondering about the future of hybrid events of this nature, what the further implementation of streaming equipment might imply for a post-Covid context. What privileges will be afforded to the remote listener?

Toby Reynolds

Christopher Bruno

From left: Robert Miller, Miguel Atwood-Ferguson, Lawrence Shaw, Surya Botofasina

From left: VCR, Sita Michelle Coltrane, Arianna Gouveia

Dublab Presents Alice Coltrane: An Expansive Spirit

California Plaza, Los Angeles, US

A free event for the wider Los Angeles community in the centre of the city, Alice Coltrane's 85th birthday celebration is a picture of what the musician, composer and spiritual jazz icon by now symbolises. The late afternoon sun glows golden between the towering financial buildings of California Plaza.

The zone's small patches of grass host reclining early bird attendees, the occasional deferential figure adding flowers to the heap before an altar. It's built by members of Coltrane aka Swamini Turiyasangitananda's own Vedantic Center, featuring a photo of their saffron-robed founder and stunningly illuminated by a shaft of natural light.

A little further up, at the back of the concrete-slab stage, opening dublab DJs Teebs and Barbarelle play suitably ambient and hymnal warm-up tunes from behind a booth adorned with marigold garlands, typical to auspicious Hindu festivals. Clothing company Online Ceramics – famous for their trippy Grateful Dead fan merch – sell Alice Coltrane edition "Om Shanti" sweatpants and "Journey To Satchidananda" T-shirts from a tent to the side, donating all the proceeds.

There's an air of bliss and excitement in the Grand Performances courtyard, as conductor and arranger Miguel Atwood-Ferguson plays along on his electric violin to The Universal Consciousness Orchestra's take on Coltrane's transcendent oeuvre. There's the post-bop jazz of her debut album *A Monastic Trio*, recorded in the same Dix Hills home her husband John Coltrane's landmark *A Love Supreme* was composed. Then it's the cosmic synths and sophisticated applications of traditional melodies of her *Ashram Tapes* – once privately circulated among devotees, now publicly available as part of the 2017 release of *The Ecstatic Music Of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda* compilation via David Byrne's Luaka Bop label.

At one point, Sita Michelle Coltrane initiates a communal mantra to settle the buzzing late night crowd as she makes a speech in honour of her late mother. Later, she'll sing as part of Sai Anantam Ashramite Surya Botofasina's ensemble playing devotional bhajans in the innovative tradition of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda.

As the sky dims and the stage glows a reddish purple, video artist Alex Pelly's visuals find form in the eternal spiral of life and creativity. At first, her jittery, responsive electrical signals seem disjunctive when it comes to Coltrane's unearthly music. But considering Pelly's focus on working with a history of video technology, conceptually speaking, it's an ideal accompaniment to the life's work of an artist consummate in combining ancient tradition with modern synthesizers.

The show is set in the shadow of a Bank of America high rise and the Angels Flight railway at the top of Bunker Hill. It's a remnant of the city's once bustling residential core – formerly an emblem of inner city decline, then a landmark of redevelopment that turned housing for the poor into a desolate central business district. Now there are apartment towers looking out on the sunken courtyard and its amphitheatre, which plays host to the Grand Performances weekly summer music programme. There's a 10pm curfew, and one or two residents peer down from their multi-story apartment windows. Below, an exultant milieu of hundreds of people from all walks of life – families bringing their children, artists, heads, hipsters – sitting on plastic chairs, lying on the darkening grass or standing behind the sound desk. An older couple dance arm in arm by an outdoor elevator.

For a hardcore music fan, a noisy outdoor venue is not an ideal setting for getting lost in the euphoric sounds of Alice Coltrane's spiritual avant garde. But as a celebration of a remarkable life, and a way to promote community in a city that's often regarded as alienating by outsiders, the event is a testament to the impact of an artist ahead of her time.

Steph Kretowicz

FARAHSTOP

Praxis

Sony Music Hall, New York, US

It's been about 85 years (measured in chicken years) since the oddball riff-mongering, funk outfit Praxis have appeared onstage. At the time of that last gig in 2006, core member Buckethead had gained an unlikely level of fame as a former member of Guns N' Roses. Back when he harboured a disarmingly parricidal penchant for KFC paraphernalia, the guitarist's identity was a closely guarded secret – he claimed to have been raised by chickens!

He first gained notice with the band's 1992 debut *Transmutation (Mutatis Mutandis)*. Even against such powerhouse bandmates as bassist and master producer Bill Laswell and P-funk stars Bootsy Collins and Bernie Worrell, Buckethead was a big part of the band's look and sound.

And it's Buckethead, it seems, that many in the audience in this corporate ballroom in Manhattan's Theatre District are here to see. Praxis arise as a power trio of Buckethead, Laswell and longtime drummer Brain for the first of two nights, to the delight of a packed house of young bros and ageing bohos. Upon taking the stage Buckethead plays a quick passage that's a bit like a Lindsey Buckingham tune; but within seconds Brain hits a four-on-the-floor rhythm, Laswell lays down a heavily flanged atmosphere and it's all NYC good time jams for bad time people. The air gets thick with smoke of varying flavours.

Yes, Buckethead still wears a bucket on his head. Laswell, seated, sounds and looks strong. Brain is skinny and slamming as ever. If there's a significant change from the olden days, it's in Buckethead's playing. He's more structured, constructing sections more than drawing lines. Not that there aren't riffs. He throws imaginary slasher themes and razor wire grooves, deploys ridiculous bass-style slapping and popping, and pulls off some left-hand hammering while manipulating an expression knob with his right, delivering a sound like Stevie Wonder's Moog. The three execute long, tight, sometimes familiar medleys, ripping on Kiss's "God Of Thunder" and Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song". Tellingly they never progress past the riffs. But there are no rubber chickens, no Halloween props, not even the Flying V with KFC racing stripes. Tonight we get an older and more mature Buckethead.

Laswell, meanwhile, gurgles so deep below the surface you have to listen hard to find him. Rumours of health problems have circulated for years, and this year a GoFundMe page was launched under "emergency-please-help-bill-laswell" to defray his medical costs. A subscription-only Bandcamp page offering, among other things, previously unreleased Praxis shows has also been set up under his name. He needed help taking and leaving the stage, but his sound was immense and immediately identifiable.

Nobody sounds like Laswell and nobody plays like Buckethead but Brain is the ballast keeping the threesome upright. The dudes may be here for Buckethead, but it's Brain who makes them move. During slower sections, those same dudes would talk through (and yell over) the band, reminding me fondly of years past at Tribeca's Wetlands (how did Buckethead get so many gigs at that hippy club?) when I used to wonder how many there even knew who was on stage. And if a few are here tonight to see that weird freak from Guns N' Roses, that's OK, too.

Kurt Gottschalk

Éliane Radigue & Carol Robinson: *OCCAM HEXA VI*

Fondation Cartier, Paris, France

Alongside the musicians who work with her, Éliane Radigue has long stressed the importance of architectural space as a component in how a composition unfolds and is heard. However, a concert that is heard inside a building is very different from one realised outside. The sonic reflections afforded by walls and ceilings are lost, replaced instead by a very different acoustic dynamic.

Radigue's earlier outdoor composition *Labyrinthe Sonore*, created for the French Pavilion at the Osaka Expo 70, was too difficult for the electronics to create; it was later realised, first by musicians at Mills college in 1998, and then with Laetitia Sonami in 2015. The outdoor premiere of *OCCAM HEXA VI*, a quintet co-authored by Radigue and Carol Robinson, the composer and clarinettist who has worked with the composer since the earliest days of the *OCCAM Ocean* works, is an opportunity to experience such unboundaried listening.

Presented as part of the Fondation Cartier's series of Nomadic Nights, *OCCAM HEXA VI* is, on the face of it, a work for five musicians, with an emphasis on brass, percussion and woodwind. All five – Robinson, Nate Wooley (trumpet), Enrico Malatesta (percussion), Robin Hayward (tuba) and Bertrand Gauguet (sax) – are deeply experienced in the concentration and nuances that the *OCCAM* compositions demand. With a couple of exceptions they're all acoustic works, created – transmitted, even – through a close relationship between Radigue and the musicians involved.

However, there is very much a sixth participant in the concert's unfolding: the late summer garden of the Fondation itself. Birdsong, the rustle of trees, the far-off sound of Paris, its traffic and bells, all joined in to create an experience of communal listening, a witnessing to sounds which won't happen in this way again. The event's subtitle is well chosen: "Jardin à l'écoute" or "Listening Garden".

OCCAM HEXA VI is the latest of several works that Robinson has co-authored with Radigue in recent years, and it is possible, to see in their close compositional relationship, an indication of a forward transmission to younger players who will take the series, or rather, this acutely attentive method of composition, into the future.

All Radigue's music rises into audibility slowly, and so it's often the case that the *OCCAM* begins before the listener realises. In this case, it's possibly a glance that Gauguet throws towards Radigue herself that signals the start which is nothing so much as a breathing through his sax, gradually picked up by Wooley, then Robinson, then Hayward. There is sound, but there is also the masterful holding of a simulacrum of stillness. Malatesta's bowed cymbals – his arms moving slowly in vertical strokes – shift the timbres towards a new density in which dense strata of sounds and harmonics appear.

At the work's midway point – approximately 20 minutes into 45 – the shimmering structure of the *OCCAM* appears, dancing like fireflies in a twilight. The *OCCAM* is characterised by a constant movement, even down to its closing moments, sustained pfffts of air from Hayward and Wooley to produce a pulsing that gradually fades into the environment of the air and the sound of the city itself.

Louise Gray

Ian Rawes & The London Sound Survey: A Celebration

Iklectik, London, UK

In October 2021 sound recordist and archivist Ian Rawes died after a short illness, aged 56. His best known legacy is London Sound Survey. Inspired by John Stow's 1598 book *A Survey Of London,* it was founded in 2008 to capture a history of the city and its people in sounds. Programmed by *The Wire*'s Tony Herrington and Iain Chambers of the record label Persistence Of Sound, this celebration of Rawes includes contributions from Elaine Mitchener and Steve Beresford, Iain Chambers and poet Kayo Chingonyi, Howlround and Chris Low, and film makers Helen Frosi and Stephen Barrett.

Nestled beneath the clatter of overhead trains, with a garden and farm animals, among the studios of artists, musicians and writers, South London's Iklectik is the perfect venue for this tribute. Herrington opens it with a reading of Rawes's 2019 Epiphanies essay from *The Wire* 423. In the piece Rawes recalls his early memories of the sounds around him: street markets, violet sellers, buskers, knife grinders, the rag and bone man, now extinct echoes of the city's former sonic canvas; and his first ventures into recording, and the founding of the London Sound Survey.

Reading from his eulogy for Rawes's funeral, Chris Low brings an intimacy to the event, retelling life stories with humour and affection. The young Rawes used the alias Ian Slaughter when he was editor of the anarcho-punk fanzine *Pigs For Slaughter* before going on to manage Glasgow's Barrowlands music venue. Some years later he returned to his London hometown to work as a vault clerk at the British Library, filing tapes for the National Sound Archive, which sowed the seed for the London Sound Survey.

In Frosi and Barrett's evocative and sensual short film *Postcards From The Volcano*, two disembodied hands slowly turn and fondle a dried wild flower, then a feather, then a fir cone, flicking its scales like a thumb piano, accompanied by recordings from a day they spent with Rawes walking on West London's Wormwood Scrubs common and neighbouring Grand Union canal.

Chingonyi's Zambian roots are revealed in the playful mysticism of his poetry as he responds to Rawes's recordings of an East Anglian naturescape, released on the Persistence Of Sound label's *From Dusk To Dawn*. Chambers simultaneously loops and transforms samples of the recordings.

Clanking metallic clunks accompany the electronic-sounding bitterns' boom, the moaning gludder and snurr of seals, the gurling wind and the brimtud and song-of-the-seashore – descriptive sound words and phrases from Rawes's book, *Honk, Conk And Squacket*, which Mitchener and Beresford portray in an improvisation of intense mutual listening and responding that is as spontaneous, unpredictable and precise as Rawes's recordings of nature. Beresford's head is buried inside the lid of Iklectik's prepared piano with his trademark collection of noisy plastic toys, intermittently emerging to play jazz textures or samples and a whammy pedal from his electronics table, while Mitchener reads from the book in her own phonemic way, dissecting words, sucking vowels and plucking consonants from the pages of Rawes's extraordinarily detailed research into bygone words for sounds. The book spotlights our reduced and lazy contemporary sound vocabulary compared to the more sophisticated listening skills of long forgotten rural communities.

Robin The Fog aka Howlround's three ancient tape machines play loops that honk, screech and racket to close the evening with a suitably cacophonous representation of one of Rawes's favourite sites of London's underground soundscape, the enormous resonant space of London Bridge's Bascule Chamber beneath the Thames.

Jo Hutton

Kiezsalon

HKW, Berlin, Germany

The wandering Kiezsalon concert series in Berlin has settled into a unique position within the city's musical landscape: with public subsidies that keep ticket prices very low, it promotes curatorial diversity and affordability, pairing obscure and well established artists from new music, experimental electronics, indie and the avant garde. That might not sound remarkable, but it is. First, because everything is expensive. And second, in a city teeming with venues and established subcultural gatekeepers, it is hard to create convincing new performance contexts for artists – and draw audiences who are willing to take a risk. Kiezsalon consistently does both, invoking the idea that subcultures do not need to be monocultures.

This episode, held in the newly renovated auditorium of House of World Cultures, offers three very different cultural strains of 21st century folk revivalism, oscillating between avant garde and avant pop. First up is the Chicago based artist (and sound studies adjunct professor) Whitney Johnson aka Matchess, whose latest album *Sonescent* was recently released by Drag City.

Lighting a single candle on a table placed centre stage and adorned with a mixer and variety of electronics, Johnson combines a single wavering, harmonically shifting drone with a tuning fork, which she hits off mic and then brings closer, the vibrating hum acoustically mirroring the oscillations' electronic purity. From there, she speaks and sings from a book of her writing, unconventionally looping her phrases – sometimes with rhythmic regularity, other times feral and aleatoric – complemented by long melody lines played on an electric viola.

Arpgeggios shimmer through a dense but consonant harmonic fog, most likely compounded from the vocal phrases sped up, filtered, delayed and decayed. Like a palindrome, the piece peaks and returns to its initial state after 20 minutes, the tuning fork realigning the meditation and drawing minimalist-inspired connections to psych, folk and sacral music.

She is followed by British composer and songwriter Alison Cotton. Wielding a viola, vocal mic and metal percussion (wind chimes), she offers both a gothier and more historical take on Anglo-Irish folk tradition. Using the Suzuki Omnichord as a harmonium stand-in, the dirge-like sound is felt immediately on "Violet May", from Cotton's recent album *The Portrait You Painted Of Me*.

The song is hers but could easily have been written centuries ago. Yet, far from retrospective, both her instrumentation and soaring, narrative vocals-only approach are boldly minimalistic. Pitched somewhere between lamentation and incantation, her cover of Dorothy Carter's "Shirts Of Lace" is a highlight. The only drawback is the heavy reverb enveloping her viola and vocals, which adds melodrama to an already pathos-laden music.

That said, Cotton's performance also set up the starkest musical contrast to Ichiko Aoba's complex J-pop-folk. Big in Japan and with a deep background in anime, film and video game soundtracks, Aoba mostly performs songs from 2020's *Wind Swept Adan*, which, in true J-pop style, unselfconsciously combines every conceivable genre reproducible on a Spanish guitar in different time signatures and speeds.

Hers is an ethereal, 7th chord heavy, Japanese language math-folk. There are surprise vaudevillian moments, like when

Ichiko Aoba

Aoba walks her fingers up the neck of her guitar like a spider, which she then feigns to swallow. This, together with the whistling and wistful melodies, sometimes teeter on the saccharine. But Aoba's stunning guitar work and songwriting craft, projected without any effects, more than make up for it. Fans line up for photos and signatures after her show, which ends with a standing ovation to her current single "Hello".

Alexander Samuels

Jack Callahan & Jeff Witscher + Territorial Gobbing + Ash Reid

Cafe Oto, London, UK

The majority of the genres we know as avant garde music have not changed all that much since they broke their respective moulds. This is not to say that these various modes are moribund, but most musique concrète sounds like it could have been made in the 1950s; most free improv sounds like it could have been made in the 60s and 70s; most laptop music sounds like it could have been made in the 90s, etc. This gig at London's Cafe Oto is different. The music is definitively in familiar avant garde idioms, but the choice of material means it could never have been made in any other era than ours.

First up is something of a Cafe Oto house band, consisting of venue employees Ash Reid, Jackson Burton and Regan Bowering, performing a piece by Reid. Full disclosure: I have been friends with Reid and familiar with her work for many years. I usually make it a point not to review my friends at any length, but she was added to the bill after I committed to write this piece, and I can say this is the most accomplished composition I have seen by her. While the parts which comprise it amount to an argument about the control imposed by sartorial bureaucracy, and the hypocrisy of those who enforce it, this argument is not delivered syllogistically, and instead the parts exist in a tense constellation.

It begins with Reid and Burton mimicking smoking against the cold, while Reid reads the dress code of an institution with "no staff uniform", which nonetheless requires employees to wear "plain (non-patterned) black or dark clothing" and "a staff badge at all times" with a list of prohibitions such as "vests, sleeveless T-shirts, cut downs or ripped clothing, and any form of beachwear including flip-flops". The performance proceeds with, inter alia, a loop of BBC newsreader Clive Myrie's claim that the cost of living crisis is "insignificant now" upon news of Queen Elizabeth II on her deathbed, before Reid proceeds to read through an octave pedal the sumptuary laws of the first Queen Elizabeth, which prohibited "superfluities of silks, cloths of gold, silver, and other most vain devices" lest young men "run into such debts and shifts as they cannot live out of danger of laws without attempting unlawful acts". The set ends with Burton reading UK Prime Minister Liz Truss's expenses before a grand finale of rubbing honey on Burton's teeth (as was Queen Elizabeth I's predilection).

Following a very fun performance with cassette tapes by Theo Gowans aka Territorial Gobbing, which culminates in him eating the content of an entire cassette, headliners Jack Callahan and Jeff Witscher take to the stage. The duo have recently launched the new music and contemporary composition label FLEA. Sitting opposite each other with MIDI controllers, their set consists of an onslaught of hundreds and hundreds of samples from throughout their lifetimes (Callahan was born in 1990 and Witscher was born in 1983). Here are a few which I noted down during the gig: the voice of Jar Jar Binks, the Windows start-up music, the intro to a song by The Killers, the intro to a song by Dr Dre, Flava Flav's famous *"yeah boy"* catchphrase (with the final syllable extending into a buzzing drone); Ronald Reagan's "tear down this wall" speech; Super Mario sound effects; and the music from the production company logos at the end of *The Simpsons*.

At one point in the proceedings Callahan moves to a piano to virtuosically pick out atonal lines while Witscher proceeds with the collage, and the melee is intermittently interrupted by prerecorded questions directed to either Callahan or Witscher, upon which the respective performer will step up to a mic and answer.

Adorno once wrote that modern art adheres to a "canon of prohibitions", and during one of these interludes Witscher is asked what he would impose as a universal law for music. Witscher replies that he would *"outlaw digital delay"*, and then this law is almost immediately broken with a large excerpt of "Flim" by Aphex Twin.

Daniel Neofetou

On Site

Exhibitions, installations, etc

Future Shock

180 Studios, London, UK

In his 1970 book *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler describes how "we have in our time released a totally new social force – a stream of change so accelerated that it influences our sense of time, revolutionises the tempo of daily life and affects the very way we feel the world around us…". He goes on to cite the "great growling engine of technology" as a major accelerative force for change, bringing new machines, new techniques and fresh creative ideas.

The 14 installations in the subterranean chambers of 180 Studios are brought together under the same Toffler masthead. They employ the latest digital tools to zip between the virtual and the physical, interrogating our perceptions of space, time and reality. There's nothing static in the transient world of Future Shock: as we step into UVA's humming threshold of *Topologies* (2022) unstoppable laser beams sweep and dart, mapping blue trapezoid frames and sloping walkways over the former parking bay; in Nonotak's *Daydream V.6* (2021) layered gauze screens carry holographic projections that breed spinning Catherine wheels and strobing tabs and bars of light to the accompaniment of out of body Zen meditative music by Takami Nakamoto.

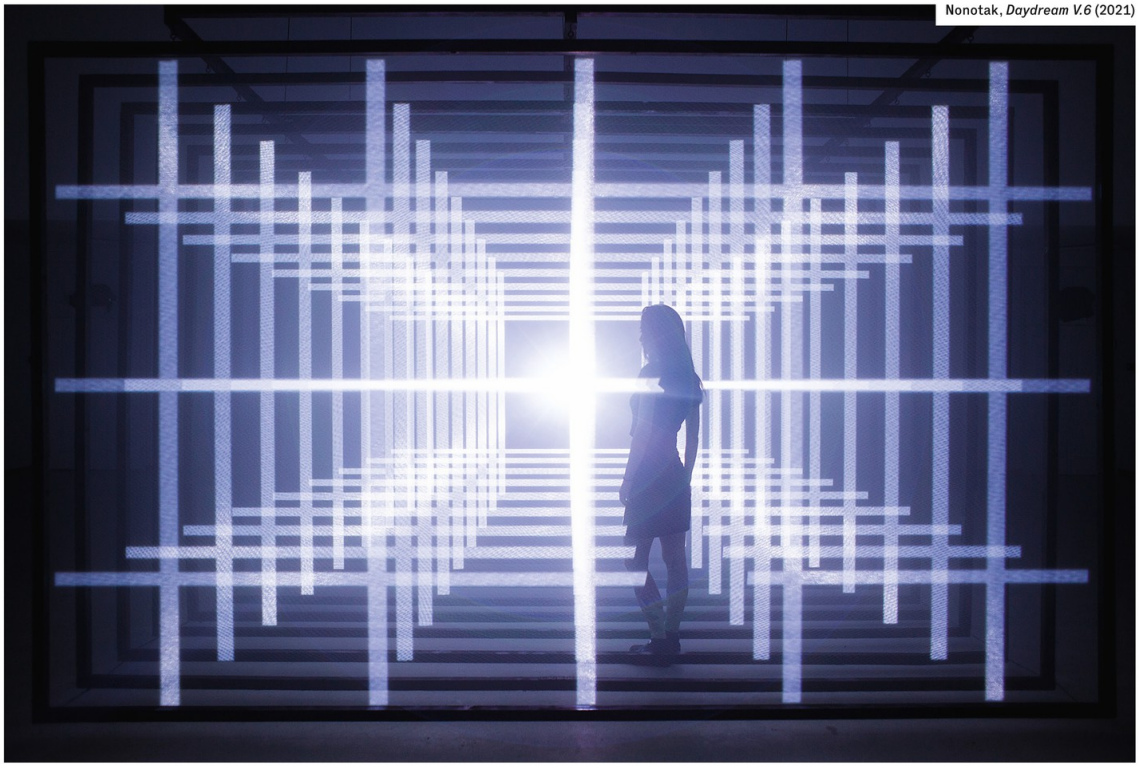
Reviewers have commented on the lack of ideas underpinning this show but themes will out, deliberately or incidentally. Environmental fragility, impending climatic catastrophe and human absence emerge across the stronger works. First up, Ryoichi Kurokawa's *Subassemblies* (2020–22) depicts contrasting environments in two wall-sized cinematic videos, one rural, the other urban, both deserted. A gigantic forest of pine trees drifts on air while opposite is the interior of an abandoned building with stairways leading nowhere; then BOOM! The pine forest tips upside down, its trees melt and bend; on the other screen, windows are malformed, rooms twist into snail-shell cavities, floors become floods, and over it sounds the sizzle of damaged electrical circuits. *Subassemblies* presents a hybrid world of the natural and the artificial, where the laws of physics have been upended to create a new reality.

Lawrence Lek's animation *Theta* (2022) features a self-driving police car patrolling an empty post-apocalyptic cityscape. Stripped of purpose, the vehicle is monitored by a traffic camera and is not free to roam, in the same way we are unwittingly under surveillance from the technology we carry around in our pockets.

In the opening pages of the Spring/Summer 2022 issue of *Fact*, the magazine published by the organisation that co-curated Future Shock with 180 Studios, editor Sean Bidder quotes philosopher David Chalmers, who proposes in his most recent book *Reality+* that "virtual worlds are real; virtual objects are real; simulations are not illusions". At a recent Queen concert at London's O2 arena, Freddie Mercury appeared in life-size digital form, singing a call and response alongside a live audience. Here, creative studio Actual Objects conjures up a set of digital humans on multiple screens who inhabit the southern border of the US, awaiting the arrival of tropical storm Vicky. They address us with their takes on the situation, but whether they're in a car, gesticulating out in the yard or indoors, their settings are frozen and their emotions plastic.

When it's working well, digital technology enriches the imagination and deepens our engagement with reality, while the physical world confers meaning on the virtual. But whichever way you cut it, a digital hurricane is not the same as a real one.

Deborah Nash



Nonotak, *Daydream V.6* (2021)

Nonotak Studio

Trevor Mathison
From Signal To Decay: Volume 1
Goldsmiths CCA, London, UK

Multi-disciplinary artist and co-founder of the pioneering Black Audio Film Collective Trevor Mathison's most noted practice over the last 40 years has been as a composer, sound designer and recordist. It further encompasses assorted multimedia design, drawing, film and image making, all showcased in From Signal To Decay: Volume 1 at the Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art. Remarkably, this is his first institutional UK solo show to date. It could be taken for a retrospective, of sorts, if only to better appreciate the realisation that it essentially isn't.

Despite an expansive presentation of the oeuvre, including an abundance of archival material, the show doesn't register as a closure of one phase, a launch of another, or a recap of anything, but rather one of myriad possible iterations – or versions – in the run-on, fretless continuum of Mathison's projects.

This version has two videos (one a tactile representation of a sinewave using a chord, the other a low-key monochrome study of precipitation from raindrops on glass to an incoming tide), a sculptural assemblage of tape loops, numerous drawings alluding to graphic scores and vitrines displaying DAT and cassette tapes with covers designed by Mathison. Performances responding to the work, described as sonic interventions, have been staged throughout the programme featuring cellist Kate Shortt, Asian Dub Foundation's Aniruddha Das and sound artist Gary Stewart who has collaborated with Mathison under the project name Dubmorphology. Otherwise, the work is soundtracked in real time by audio installations that seep, flood and merge throughout and between rooms.

In the central Oak Foundation Gallery, a split level room open to view from ground level, the CCA's history as a repurposed Victorian bathhouse is displayed in period detail, water damage and old tiles over brickwork ubiquitous elsewhere. The audio playing there is a roughly 90 minute long continuously looped, gradated showreel of sonorous, immersive bass heavy tracks and soundscapes, and it's hard to overstate how evocatively the room is inundated by tides of time-stretching, time-dissolving sound. Via two channels in an adjacent corridor, a live feed of environmental noise from the heaving thoroughfare of New Cross Road outside the gallery filters through. Where sound spill is often an annoyance in contemporary art exhibitions, here it's all part of an integrated palimpsestic hum.

It may be a stock observation, but Mathison's methods call to mind the fact that some of dub's most celebrated innovations involve instrumentalising – even playing – the studio space itself. They could recall apocrypha surrounding the Black Ark with Lee 'Scratch' Perry activating adjacent spaces too. Perry is said to have used buried mics, recorded his call and response with nearby livestock and actively exposed master tapes to environmental degradation.

That's probably a more apt analogy than what the artist's intention to "play the building back to itself" might first suggest: a disgruntled William Burroughs putting a cafe out of business with his cut-up method, weaponised as a hex. Burroughs recorded and played back the establishment's sonic environment at it, upending and seizing its temporal continuity. There's no hexing or other occult skullduggery in Mathison's sonic explorations, but there's a mutability of time and medium that suggests quasi-magical manoeuvres. With studios as a distant referent, they also trespass symbolic hulls between a nominal space of exhibition and one of recording, playback, performance or intervention.

James Gormley

Installation views of Trevor Mathison's *From Signal To Decay: Volume 1*

Courtesy Goldsmiths CCA

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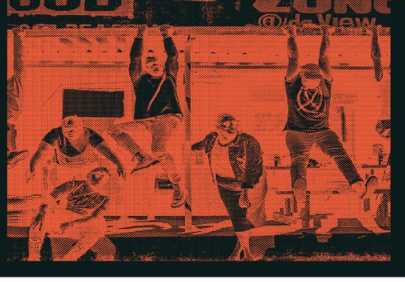

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Jana Rush

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Events at the North East London venue for experimental music include: Jana Rush (5 November), Duncan Harrison (6), Jarboe + Jozef Van Wissem (8–9), Internal Contraption + Spew + Rude Mechanicals (10), Ka Baird + Tasos Stamou (11), Xhosa Cole's *Ibeji* featuring Hamid Drake (13), Oki (14), Anthony Joseph: Precious & Impossible (15), Robyn's Rocket (17), Om 50 with Gerry Hemingway (18), Matinee: Strangeness Of Jazz with Edward George (20), Richard Pinhas (21), Laila Sakini + Dennis Tyfus (22), Cara de Asís & Ryoko Akama (24) and Jessica Moss (28). London Cafe Oto, various times and prices, cafeoto.co.uk

GIOfest UK
The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra's annual festival of improvised music, conductions and experimental scores. Line-up to be announced. Glasgow CCA, 30 November–3 December, glasgowimprovisersorchestra.com

Iklectik UK
Events at the South London performance space include: John Chantler + Heinrich Schwarzer + Deniz Erdem (4 November), Elif Yalvaç + Sascha Brosamer & Graham Dunning (5), *Live Visuals* Book Launch Afterparty with The Light Surgeons + Atau Tanaka & Adriana Sá (6), Klangzeit Festival (11–12), and Chthonic Festival (25–26). London Iklectik, various times and prices, iklectikartlab.com

UK festivals

Erased Tapes
All-dayer on Guy Fawkes Night marking the 15th anniversary of the diverse independent label Erased Tapes. With live performances from Rival Consoles, Qasim Naqvi, Clark, Plaid, Andy Stott, Gilles Peterson, Ben Lukas Boysen, Masayoshi Fujita, Flora Yin-Wong and Hatis Noit, plus DJs including Tom Ravenscroft. London Printworks, 5 November, noon–11pm, £38–£27, erasedtapes.com

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival
This year's line-up features a world premiere by Raven Chacon of a composition for brass ensemble, Julia Holter's live soundtrack with band and chorus to Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 silent film *The Passion Of Joan Of Arc*, Nwando Ebizie's *The Swan*, the Oram Awards ceremony, works by composer-in-residence Lisa Streich, Rebecca Saunders' music for a collaborative film by Gerhard Richter & Corinna Belz, a performance by Cat Hope's Decibel ensemble, improvisors perform to a film of Alan Davie painting, Explore Ensemble play Mark Fell, and Pat Thomas's solo improvisation. Huddersfield various venues, 18–27 November, various times and prices, hcmf.co.uk

London Jazz Festival
Hundreds of concerts over ten days across the capital. Featuring Chicago x London with Angel Bat Dawid, Ben LaMar Gay, Alabaster DePlume and Jeff Parker (12 November), Henry Threadgill's Zooid + Anthony Braxton (13), Ron Carter (13), Collocutor (13), Xhosa Cole's *Ibeji* featuring Hamid Drake (13), Giuliano Modarelli Indo Jazz Fusion (13), Jason Yarde (14), Abdullah Ibrahim (15), The Brother Moves On (15), Horse Lords (16), Dave Holland's Aziza (16), Camilla George (16), Matana Roberts: Coin Coin Chapter IV (17), Kwake Bass (17), Colectiva (17), The Olie Brice Octet (17), Levitation Orchestra (18), Makaya McCraven (18), Black Top with Mariam Rezaei (19), Jean Toussaint (19), Bendik Giske (19), Webster/Holub Invites (19), Don Cherry Tribute featuring Kahil El'Zabar and Neneh Cherry (20), Strangeness Of Jazz with Edward George (20), Nduduzo Makhathini (20), Led Bib + Anthropods (20) and Eiko Ishibashi (20). London various venues, 11–20 November, various times and prices, efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk

Pitchfork
14 events over five days including Animal Collective, Big Joanie, billy woods, Black Country New Road, Coby Sey, Jenny Hval, Marina Herlop, They Hate Change and William Basinski. London various venues, 9–13 November, various times and prices, pitchforkmusicfestival.co.uk

Sound/Image
A weekend of talks, screenings, loudspeaker orchestra concerts and workshops. Artists include Trevor Wishart, KMRU and Nina Hartstone. London University of Greenwich, 18–20 November, gre.ac.uk

International festivals

C2C Italy
The 20th anniversary of this Turin festival features Arca, Autechre, Makaya McCraven, Low, AYA, Kode9, Bill Kouligas, Caterina Barbieri, Deena Abdelwahed, Bicep, Lyra Pramuk and Caribou. Turin various venues, 3–6 November, clubtoclub.it

Cosmic Awareness Germany
Festival of utopian sounds and sci-fi influenced music with concerts, installations, films, lectures, discussions and "a few surprises". Artists involved include Lonnie Holley, Space Afrika, Klein, Kristen Gallerneaux, Gelbart,and many more. Berlin HKW, 10–13 November, hkw.de

FEaST US
A diverse set of evening concerts from organisers Feed Me Weird Things featuring a broad range of artists including Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Lubomyr Melnyk, Joe Rainey, Masma Dream World, Duma, Olivia Block, Patrick Shiroishi and Marisa Anderson. Iowa City various venues, 3–5 November, various times & prices, feedmeweird.com

Jazzfest Berlin Germany
New developments in jazz and improvised music with Hamid Drake Honouring Alice Coltrane, Matana Roberts's *Coin Coin Chapter Four: Memphis*, Ben LaMar Gay, Kris Davis, Tomeka Reid, Craig Taborn, Sven-Åke Johansson, MM Schäumend – overture for 15 hand fire extinguishers, Asher Gamedze, The Brother Moves On, Silvia Tarozzi & Deborah Walker, Peter Brötzmann, and Mette Rasmussen Trio North. Berlin various venues, 3–6 November, various times and prices, berlinerfestspiele.de

Le Guess Who? The Netherlands
Utrecht festival featuring programmes guest curated by Animal Collective, Clipping and Curl. With Low, Laurel Halo, Abdullah Ibrahim, Alpha Maid, Moor Mother & billy woods, Kee Avil, Jana Rush, Mica Levi, Horse Lords, Mary Ocher, Divide And Dissolve, Keeley Forsyth, Marina Herlop, They Hate Change, Nappy Nina, Asher Gamedze, Dry Cleaning, Maëva Berthelot & Coby Sey's *A Tender Ascent*, Les Filles De Illighadad, Jeff Parker, Nkisi, Dreamcrusher, Keiji Haino, Tumi Mogorosi and Supersilent. Utrecht various venues 10–13 November, leguesswho.com

Lucerne Forward Festival Switzerland
Four concerts and a workshop for kids by The Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra in the city's cultural centre. Music by Anna Thorvaldsdottir, György Ligeti, Anna Korsun and others alongside

Lawrence Agyei

improvisation and open scores performed inside a planetarium and a swimming pool. Lucerne KKL, 18–20 November, lucernefestival.ch

Mira Spain
Digital arts festival with Squarepusher, Michael Rother plays Neu!, Alva Noto, Caterina Barbieri, Kali Malone with Lucy Railton and Stephen O'Malley, Keith Fullerton Whitman and Loraine James. Barcelona Fira de Montjuïc, 11–12 November, €90, mirafestival.com

Mucho Flow Portugal
Festival looking for the new rather than the safe, With Skee Mask, AYA & Sweatmother, Slikback, Kai Whiston, Object Blue, Ill Considered and more. Guimarães various venues, 4–5 November, muchoflow.net

Rainy Days Luxembourg
Contemporary music festival comprising 21 concerts and installations and 16 world premieres. Performers include Yarn/Wire, Thomas Ankersmit, Juliet Fraser, Francisco López, Ensemble Musikfabrik, Ensemble Recherche and Les Percussions De Strasbourg; with works by Nwando Ebizie, Helmut Lachenmann, Liza Lim and many more. Luxembourg Philharmonie Luxembourg, 15–27 November, various times & prices, philharmonie.lu

Radical Sounds Latin America Germany
Berlin based festival with live performances, workshops and lectures. Featured artists include Mabe Fratti, M Takara & Carla Boregas, Lila Tirando a Violeta and many more. Berlin various venues, 5 & 16–21 November, radicalsoundslatinamerica.com

Saint Ghetto Switzerland
Annual music festival in an old riverside factory with Coby Sey, Marina Herlop, Angel Bat Dawid, Loraine James, Divide And Dissolve, Jenny Hval, Ka Baird, Valentina Magaletti, AYA, Kae Tempest and more. Bern Dampfzentrale, 17–20 November, dampfzentrale.ch

Sonic City Belgium
Three day festival curated by Low, Black Country, New Road and Gilla Band featuring Horse Lords, Kali Malone's *Does Spring Hide Its Joy* featuring Lucy Railton & Stephen O'Malley, Arooj Aftab, Kokoko!, Daniel Blumberg, Divide And Dissolve, Les Filles De Illighadad, Billy No Mates, Wu-Lu, Crack Cloud, Goat and others. Kortrijk Depart, 11–13 November, wildewesten.be

Transmissions Switzerland
Festival of music celebrates experimentation, spontaneity and challenges to the status quo. With Lucrecia Dalt, Kali Malone, Valentina Magaletti, Silvia Tarozzi Quintet, Marta Salogni, Floating Points and others. Ravenna Museo d'Arte della Città di Ravenna, 24–27 November, transmissionsfestival.org

Online & hybrid events

Roulette US/Online
Online and in-person concerts at New York's long-running experimental performance space include: Scott Robinson & Wadada Leo Smith (3 November), Charlemagne Palestine & MV Carbon: *Liquiddd Changesss* album release (6), Myra Melford's Fire & Water (7), Kelly Moran (8), Robin Holcomb + Sara Schoenbeck & Wayne Horvitz (10), Joanna Mattrey featuring Billy Martin (11), William Hooker: The Silver Fleece (13), Sylvie Courvoisier Chimeara featuring Christian Fennesz, Wadada Leo Smith and Nate Wooley (15), Kirk Knuffke/Matthew Shipp/Michael Bisio (28) and Webber/Morris Big Band: Pulse (29). Online & New York Roulette, various times and prices, roulette.org

Special events

Blank Forms Annual Gala: Honouring Thulani Davis US
Revised date for the annual fundraiser of publisher, label and event organiser Blank Forms in honour of the poet, writer, interdisciplinary artist and scholar Thulani Davis. Hosted by Arthur Jafa. Programme to be be announced. New York venue to be announced, 15 November, tickets from $500: corinne@blankforms.org, blankforms.org

IF: Improvisers Forum US
Occasional improvising duets courtesy of the Frederick Experimental Music Association continues with Michael Formanek on double bass and Brian Settles on tenor saxophone . Frederick YMCA Arts Center, 5 November, 7:30pm, $10/free for children and students, pointofdeparture.org

Kontraklang Germany
Monthly exploratory music concert with Portraits De Voix by Alessandro Bossetti (Villa Elisabeth, 5 November). Berlin various venues, times and prices, kontraklang.de

Rewire x Korzo: Arooj Aftab + Lucrecia Dalt Germany
Performances from New York based Pakistani vocalist and songwriter Aftab, and Berlin based Colombian electronic artist Dalt who performs duo versions of songs from her new album *iAy!*. The Hague Korzo Theatre, 25 November, 6:30pm, €21.20, rewirefestival.nl

Exhibitions & installations

British Art Show 9 UK
Hayward Gallery touring exhibition featuring works by experimental vocalist Elaine Mitchener, gothic dancehall producer Gaika, multidisciplinary artist Tai Shani, flim makers Beatrice Gibson and Laurence Lek, and dozens more. Plymouth various venues, until 23 December. britishartshow9.co.uk

Drum Listens To Heart US
Part two of this exhibition where artists explore percussive themes includes artworks by Raven Chacon, Susan Howe & David Grubbs and The Otolith Group, and a performance by Nkisi (26 November). San Francisco CCA Wattis Institute, 9 November–17 December, wattis.org

Bill Fontana Turkey
Two works by the sound artist: *Silent Echoes–Notre-Dame*, a ten-channel sound installation streaming the sounds of the ten bells of Notre-Dame Cathedral to Istanbul as they respond to the ambient sounds of Paris; and *Resounding Io*, an experimental video. Istanbul Arter, until 4 December, arter.org.tr

Ragnar Kjartansson: Time Changes Everything The Netherlands
Icelandic artist working through a variety of media including video installation, music, performance and painting. The exhibition includes work in all these areas as well as a new video installation *No Tomorrow* made with composer Bryce Dessner. Tilburg De Pont Museum, until 29 January, depont.nl

Hannah Catherine Jones UK
Solo exhibition by the artist, composer, scholar and DJ aka Foxy Moron. A sensory installation incorporating soundscapes, plants and teas which houses new videos, performances, sound works and drawings on the themes of decolonisation and healing. London Mimosa House, until 23 December, mimosahouse.co.uk

Solar Radio US
Installation by Anna Friz and Absolute Value Of Noise in which a sunlight-activated AI recreates the natural sounds it hears and remembers. Online & NY Acra Wave Farm, ongoing, free, wavefarm.org

Visual Record US
Exploring the place where sound meets printmaking with works by John Cage, Christian Marclay, Bethany Collins and Audra Wolowiec. An accompanying publication includes an essay by author and *Wire* writer David Toop. New York Print Center, until 21 January 2023, free, ipcny.org

UK on stage

Animal Collective
Baltimore's experimental pop group return with their new album *Time Skiffs* (Domino): Limerick Dolans (2 November), Dublin National Concert Hall (3), Bristol SWX (6), Manchester Albert Hall (7) and Glasgow Saint Luke's (9). myanimalhome.net

***Arcadia* Live**
A live performance and screening of Paul Wright's 2018 film about British people's shifting relationship to the land. Will Gregory and Adrian Utley perform their soundtrack to the film as part of a nine-piece ensemble: Bristol St George's (11 November), Sunderland The Fire Station (30) and London Barbican (4 March 2023). sounduk.net

Big Joanie
Feminist post-punk trio on tour: London Rough Trade East (4 November), Nottingham Rough Trade Nottingham (6), Bristol Rough Trade Bristol (7), Brighton Resident Music (8), Manchester Albert Hall (11), London The Roundhouse (13). bigjoanie.com

Black Midi
Hyper math rock trio turning increasingly prog on their third album *Hellfire* (Rough Trade): Glasgow Old Fruitmarket (14 November) and Bristol SWX (16). bmblackmidi.com

Boat-Ting
Monthly improvised music club: Kay Grant/

Hannah Catherine Jones

Jermaine Francis

Dominic Lash/Martin Vishnick + John Bisset with text performer Iris Colomb + Alex Ward (7 November). London Bar & Co, 8pm, £8–£5, boat-ting.co.uk

The Bug
Kevin Martin dubs the rhythms for guest MC Flowdan plus, in London, Manga Saint Hilare and Logan. London Fabric (2 November) and Leeds Belgrave (3). thebugmusic.bandcamp.com

Curious Ear
Improvised music from Clara De Asis & Ryoko Akama + Ikbal Lubys: Manchester Ascension Church, 26 November, 2:30pm, £10–£8, curiousear.net

Henry Dagg & Evan Parker
Launch concert for the debut CD *Then Through Now* by saxophonist Parker and Dagg, who has developed an electronic instrument to both generate its own sounds and process his partner's playing. Faversham The Hot Tin, 20 November, 5pm, £25–£10, routestock.org

Decibel
Conceptually driven composer and performer Cat Hope's Australian ensemble integrating acoustic and electronic elements. Bath Michael Tippett Centre (21 November), Liverpool Tung Auditorium (23), Huddersfield St Paul's Hall (26), London City University (29), London Cafe Oto (30) and London Brunel Museum (2 December). decibelnewmusic.com

Divide And Dissolve
Decolonialist doom-riffs from the Melbourne duo: London Oslo (13 November), Salford The White Hotel (14), Newcastle upon Tyne Star & Shadow (15), Glasgow Hug And Pint (16) and Dublin Whelan's (17). divideanddissolve.com

Injury Reserve
Experimental hiphop trio from Phoenix, Arizona: Brighton Chalk (31 October), Bristol Trinity Centre (1 November), Manchester Manchester Academy 3 (2), Edinburgh Summerhall (3), Leeds Belgrave Music Hall (4), Birmingham O2 Institute 2 (5), Dublin 1 Green Room (7), London Pitchfork Music Festival (9), London Oval Space (10). injuryreserve.bandcamp.com

Fizzle
Improvised music and avant jazz from Paul Dunmall/Liam Noble/John Edwards/Mark Sanders (3 November), Birmingham Improvisers Orchestra (13), Kit Downes/Thomas Morgan/Eli Makabe (16), Jean Toussaint Quartet (17) John Edwards/Kjetil Møstar/Erik Dag Knedal (22). Birmingham various venues, times and prices, fizzlebirmingham.com

Free Range
Adventurous Canterbury promoter's Autumn season wraps up with Maggie Nicols & The Free Range Orchestra. Canterbury Colyer Fergusson Hall, 19 November, 8pm, pay what you decide, freerangecanterbury.org

Godflesh
Justin Broadrick's industrial metal duo with BC Green returns: Manchester Bowlers Exhibition Centre (5 November) Dublin Opium Rooms (11) and Belfast Limelight (12). godflesh1.bandcamp.com

PJ Harvey: *Orlando*
A spoken work tour with Harvey reading from her experimental novel and discussing her work: Brighton The Old Market (8 November). pjharvey.net

Horse Lords
Circular experimental rock from the Baltimore quartet: Salford The White Hotel (15 November) and London Moth Club (16). horselords.org

The Jazz Cafe
Concerts include Omar Souleyman (2 November), Bill Frisell's Harmony (8), Camilla George album launch (16), Nduduzo Makhathini (20) and Terry Reid (27). London Jazz Cafe, various times and prices, thejazzcafelondon.com

Julia Holter: *The Passion Of Joan Of Arc*
The singer, songwriter and composer performs her soundtrack to Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 silent film *The Passion Of Joan Of Arc* with her band including Tashi Wada and the 36-strong Chorus Of Opera North, operanorth.co.uk

Hundred Years Gallery
Concerts of improvised and other music at this intimate London Gallery include Colin Webster/Verity Lane/Mark Wastell/Douglas Benford matinee (13 November, 3:30pm) and Mark Holub & Colin Webster (19). London Hundred Years Gallery, 7:30pm unless stated otherwise, prices vary, hundredyearsgallery.co.uk

K-Music
South Korean concert series continues with Sun-Mi Hong (17 November) and Park Jiha (24). London various venues, times and prices, serious.org.uk

Lotic: Water
DJ and producer is joined by three horn players for her latest live show, with lasers by visual artist Emmanuel Biard. London Milton Court Concert Hall, 27 November, 8pm, £20–£5, barbican.org.uk

Mopomoso
Monthly improvised music matinee with Colin Webster solo; Arc with Gus Garside, Sylvia Hallett and Danny Kingshill; and Hard Edges with Chris Dowding, Ben Higham and Dave Amis. London Vortex, 2pm, £12–£8. London Vortex, 27 November, 2pm, £12–£8. vortexjazz.co.uk

Jessica Moss
Violinist, composer, arranger and former member of Thee Silver Mt Zion who has a new album out on Constellation featuring Jim White on drums and Thierry Amar on upright bass: London Cafe Oto (28 November), Bristol The Crofters Rights (29), London Bloc (30) and Newcastle upon Tyne The Lubber Fiend (1 December). jessicamoss.bandcamp.com

Michael Rother & Friends Celebrate 50 Years of Neu!
Neu!'s motorik rock classic revisited by their guitarist Rother half a century after its original release. London Clapham Grand, 3 November, 7:30pm, £30. dice.fm

The Old Hairdressers
Avant happenings at the Glasgow venue, bar and gallery include: Francis Plagne + Warm Currency (19 November), Rainy Miller + Kute (26). Glasgow The Old Hairdressers, various times & prices.. theoldhairdressers.com

Jeff Parker
Tortoise and former Chicago Underground Quartet guitarist tours his new live album: Cork Cork Jazz Festival (30 October), Dublin Sugar Club (1 November), Belfast Black Box (2) and London Barbican (12). jeffparkersounds.com

The Rose Hill
Brighton adventurous music venue: Safehouse open improvisation session (2 November), Passepartout Duo (10), N'famady Kouyaté (12), Andrew Greaves & Dan Powell: Inside Journeys (17), Eyeless Joy with Zahra Haji Fath Ali Tehrani and many more (19). Brighton The Rose Hill, various times and prices, therosehill.co.uk

The Tapeworm Presents Memorex
An evening of words, pictures and music with The Pathfinders, Cathi Unsworth and Opal X, hosted by Travis Elborough. London The Horse Hospital, 4 November, 7pm, £10, thehorsehospital.com

Two Ship
Monthly improvised music gig organised by Olie Brice. This month: Alan Wilkinson solo + Tom Jackson/Benedict Taylor/Daniel Thompson. Hastings The Nest, 26 November, 7pm, £6, eventbrite.co.uk

Incoming

Big Ears US
200 performances over four days in downtown Knoxville. With Grouper, Arooj Aftab, Bill Frisell, Tyshawn Sorey, Marc Ribot, 700 Bliss, Carl Stone, Makaya McCraven, Mary Halvorson, Éliane Radigue, Annea Lockwood, Catherine Lamb, Steve Reich, Terry Allen, Bill Orcutt Guitar Quartet, James 'Blood' Ulmer, eight John Zorn projects to mark his 70th birthday, William Parker, Steve Gunn, Lonnie Holley, Kali Malone and more. TN Knoxville various venues, 30 March–2 April 2023, bigearsfestival.org

DECIBEL UK TOUR 22

Nov 21 Michael Tippett Centre Bath Spa
Nov 23 University of Liverpool
Nov 26 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival
Nov 29 City University London
Nov 30 Café Oto London
Dec 2 Brunel Museum London

→ decibelnewmusic.com

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Madeiradig Portugal
Week-long festival on a Portuguese island with four days of concerts on the main stage featuring Phew, Raven Chacon, Bob Ostertag, Beatriz Ferreyra, Silvia Tarozzi & Deborah Walker, Richard Skelton, Alison Cotton, Sofie Birch, Gabriel Ferrandini and Pedro Pestana. Madeira various venues, 8–13 December, madeiradig.com

Sonic Matter Switzerland
Zurich festival for experimental music comprising concerts, sound journeys, lounges, talks and exhibitions. This year's festival is partnering with Nyege Nyege in Uganda and features Yao Bobby, Ale Hop, Jason Kahn, Rhodri Davies, Robin Hayward and others, plus music by Alvin Lucier, Éliane Radigue and more. Zurich various venues, 1–4 December, sonicmatter.ch

Underground Institute Festival Germany
The agency and platform for difficult to classify artists set up by Mary Ocher hosts a festival with performances by Limpe Fuchs, El Khat, DJ Marcelle, Ka Baird and others; talks by Martin Rev and Cedrik Fermont; a sound installation by KMRU; and DJ sets by Xiu Xiu and Zoë Mc Pherson. Plus workshops and a soundwalk. Berlin Silent Green, Panke and gr_und gallery, 8–10 December, underground-institute.com

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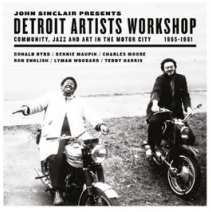


SCAN ME!

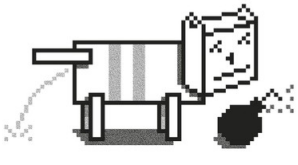
John Sinclair Presents Detroit Artists Workshop
Out Now

This first compilation of Detroit Artists Workshop is **a revelation for any fan of jazz**, featuring previously unreleased recordings by Byrd, Moore, English, Woodard, Bennie Maupin and Teddy Harris accompanied by extensive sleeve notes from John Sinclair, Robin Eichele and Herb Boyd. All tracks are remastered from the original tapes by Technology Works.

SCAN ME!

Balka Sound - Son Du Balka
Out Nov 11th

Hailing from Congo-Brazzaville and led by revered vocalist and ngonfi player, Nkibi "Lusialala" Albert, Balka Sound created their own unique musical world, **re-imagining traditional Congolese Balka rhythms** with electric guitars, electric bass, drums, and microphones, alongside the traditional 5-string Ngonfi. This compilation brings together their incredible early '80s recordings for the first time.



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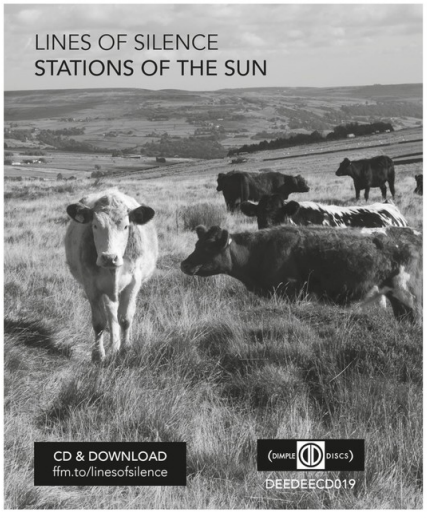

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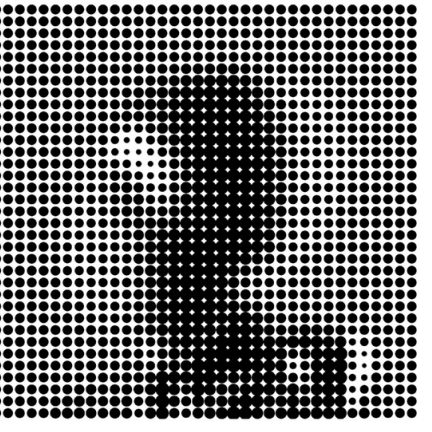

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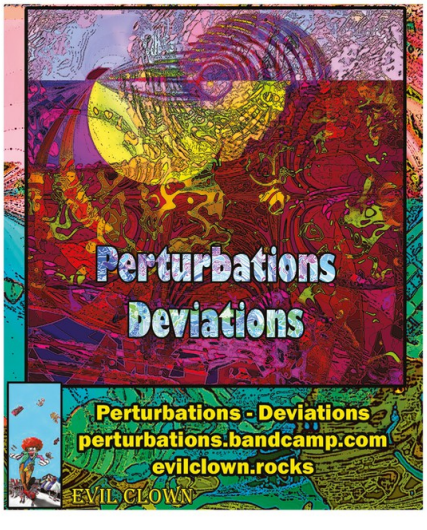

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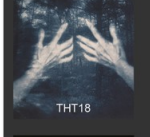

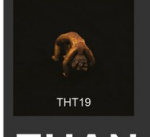

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THT18. **Susana Santos Silva** – All The Birds And A Telephone Ringing (LP/CD/DL)

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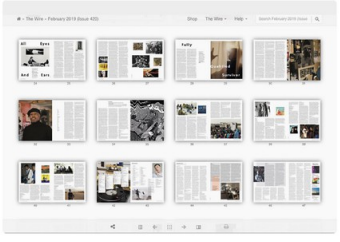

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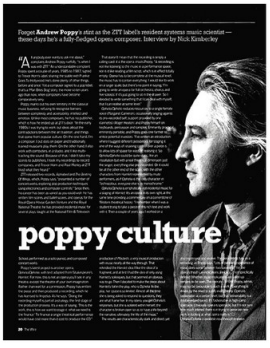

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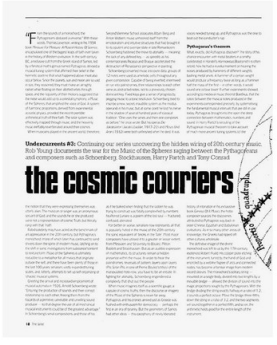

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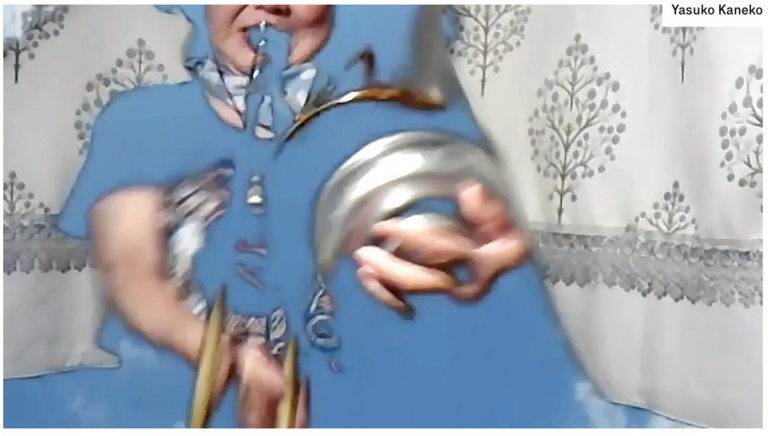
Epiphanies

In the midst of the pandemic, saxophonist **Raymond MacDonald** finds companionship and connection in the online jams of Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra


Yasuko Kaneko

"Why should our bodies end at the skin?"
– Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"

Yasuko Kaneko appears on screen, her hair, arms and body dissolving into glorious, flower-speckled wallpaper. Her smiling, disembodied face and instrument are foregrounded and the inviting tones of her trombone gently draw us into a park in Okayama, Japan. Where is she, at home or outside? Where does her body end and the wallpaper begin? Sound and vision are merged in a wonderous, post-human apparition.

I hadn't been expecting a revelation. Asking Evan Parker how to circular breathe, playing with Lol Coxhill for the first time in a small bar in Glasgow, meeting Marilyn Crispell in Newcastle, seeing Abdullah Ibrahim and Carlos Ward at the Moir Hall in 1985, are all treasured moments. But in March 2020, a new epiphany was on the horizon. At the start of the pandemic lockdown, The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra's sessions were cancelled and, like everyone around the world, we were plunged into the unknown.

We decided to meet online, mostly out of a need to stay connected and offer mutual support. However, to everyone's surprise, the creative process of improvising with each other over Zoom became exhilarating in itself. It was not just a pale imitation of real-life improvising, but, as we explored our new stage, complete with virtual backgrounds, domesticity and dodgy wifi, new ways of working, listening, seeing, hearing and being together started to emerge. We termed our virtual stage The Zoomesphere, and our creative domesticity The Theatre Of Home.

There was a fundamental change in how I approached the saxophone. Gone was the desire to produce a full tone, since that meant not hearing what others were playing. I found playing 'normally' meant I couldn't get close to the screen that was the window to my community. What emerged was an increased interest in small sounds, key clicks, breath, voice and suchlike, sounds I could easily place into the evolving sonic world emerging from the screen. As I experimented, domestic objects – kitchenware, furniture, stationery, paints, food – became essential musical instruments, offering sonic and visual possibilities never considered before. The idiosyncrasies of the Zoom software – latencies, glitches, thinning of sounds – did not hamper our interactions, but instead became emergent aspects of the music.

More fundamentally, the embodied nature of my musical experience was changing. My hands could be enlarged and disembodied as they appeared in a Zoom frame, reflected and merged with my friends' frames on the screen. My saxophone could be displayed in forensic detail, as the bell disappeared into the lens while blowing tiny sounds that merged with the new images.

The group grew to over 100 people around the world. Performing together online, sound and images blended in ways I had never experienced. Playing with light – from the window, my phone and any lamp I could find – offered exhilarating contrasts and surreal versions of myself morphed with music. Pianist Maria Sappho's body seemed to melt into a virtual landscape and other bodies accompanied by ethereal piano, and it became ambiguous where one body ended and another began. Japanese guitarist Yasuhiro Usui in Nagoya was creating psychedelic swirling films while teasing perfectly matched sonic waterfalls from his fretboard supported by laserbeams from Jessica Argo's theremin in Glasgow. Vocalist Maggie Nicols would use her mobile phone to project an image, perhaps a view from a train window, accompanied by quietly humming voice. Each sound, each frame was of equal importance, and would be foregrounded or hidden as dictated by mercurial Zoom algorithms.

As a player, being heard all the time, or even most of the time, ceased to be important. Being present mattered, being together, sharing, oversharing and supporting each other in a caring, ethereal rollercoaster of togetherness.

I destroyed my ageing computer with paint, plants, water, pasta, pots and pans, as the improvisational priorities of the moment meant all manner of stupidity became essential, legitimate forms of artistic expression in a new post-human praxis. I attempted to create interesting sounds by pouring water from an overflowing glass millimetres from my computer's camera. I squeezed huge dollops of paint onto paper while singing Ivor Cutler songs. We were expressing a universal need to be connected and support each other.

To be socially creative is a defining feature of our humanity and these sessions were affording new ways to achieve this goal during desperate times. I was often moved to tears and frequently found myself speechless – hard to believe if you've ever heard me in person – at the end of a long improvisation, since I had been transported to a meditative, almost transcendental, state.

We experimented with new ways of structuring the music: a disembodied conductor's hand in one frame gave signals to be followed; scribbled instructions on bits of paper were held up to the screen; fragments were recorded on our mobile phones and instantly played back. I developed collaborative relationships with people whom I had never encountered, most notably Rachel Joy Weiss in a collaboration titled "Duet For Two People Who Have Never Met". And two years on, we have still never met.

The screen became our stage, two dimensional and flattening the normal horseshoe curve of our regular set-up. We were simultaneously audience and performers, watching ourselves play, each occupying the same sized rectangle on the screen, liberated in many ways from some of the normal expectancies of our in-person music making. We marked the passing of close friends, musical legends, with improvised requiems. English guitarist John Russell was with us every week, sharing his music and his journey with brave, beautiful and generous stories, until be passed away. We marked the passing of friends Keith Tippett and Henry Grimes with improvisations and engaged with geopolitical events with collective mourning, while appreciating our privileged position, connecting over the internet.

There is a sense that whatever happened during lockdown is in the past and that we are moving on, wanting to leave behind the world of lockdown communication, but some lessons learned may stay – perhaps in a hybrid way, perhaps a merged audiovisual world. One thing is certain, the epiphany of online improvisation has changed how I think, feel and experience music. Even more importantly, this epiphany has enhanced my love and appreciation of the local and global musical community that helps define who I am. ☐ GIOfest XV takes place in person and online this month: see Out There.
glasgowimprovisersorchestra.com

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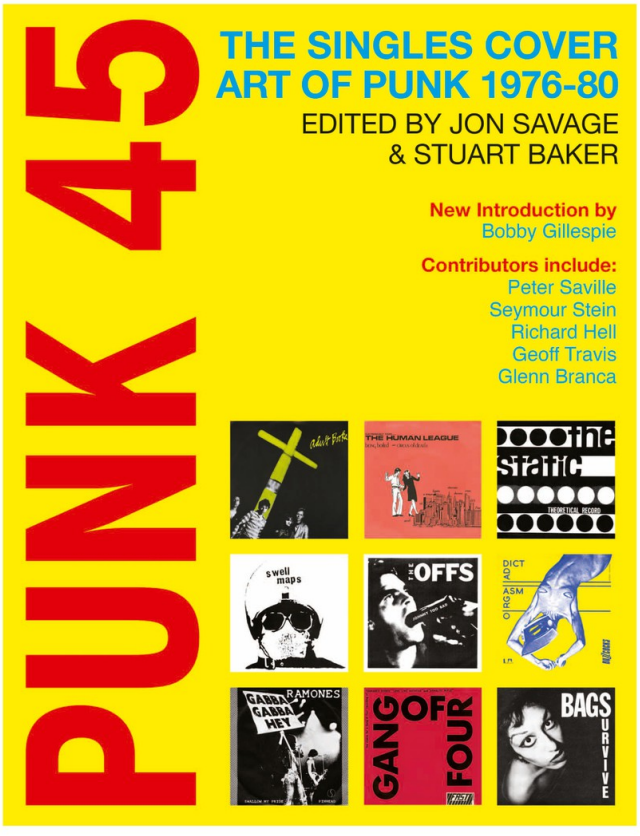


PUNK 45 BOOK

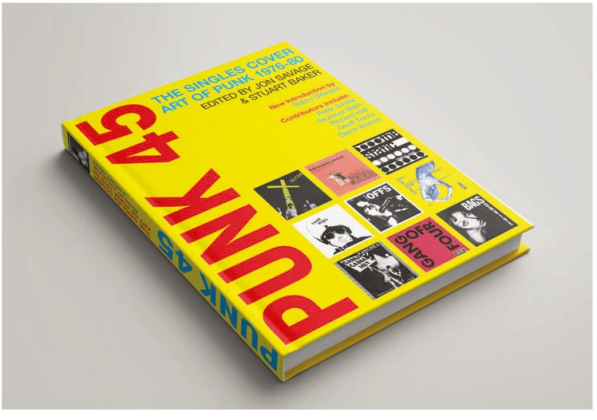
THE SINGLES COVER ART OF PUNK 1976-80

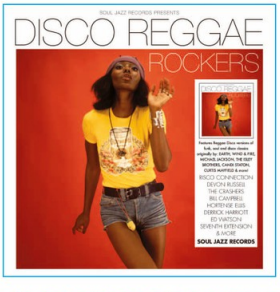
Edited by Jon Savage and Stuart Baker

Brand new edition of Soul Jazz Records' massive deluxe 400-page Punk 45s cover art book edited and compiled by Jon Savage (author of the seminal book on punk, England's Dreaming) and Stuart Baker (founder of Soul Jazz Records).

This new edition comes with a new introduction from Bobbie Gillespie, founder of Primal Scream (who has recently also published his memoirs Tenement Kid).

Contributors include Peter Saville, Richard Hell, Richard H Kirk, Seymour Stein, Geoff Travis, Martin Moscrop, Glenn Branca, Jamie Reid, Dave Robinson, Roger Armstrong, Martin Mills, Gee Vaucher, Savage Pencil, Dennis Morris and more.





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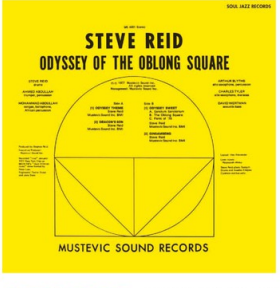

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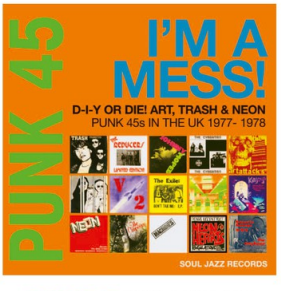

PUNK 45 I'M A MESS

SJRLP 505

First released in a deluxe vinyl-only edition (sold out), Soul Jazz Records' 'PUNK 45: I'm A Mess' is now being released in standard double album vinyl and for the first time on CD. Hidden gems from the wastelands of the early days of punk, totally in keeping with the spirit of the time, this is high-octane, righteously-independent music - DIY or die!

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